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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this booklet is twofold: (1) to train students to undertand and use the wealth of cultural materials on this American urban neighborhood of St. Louis, The Ville: and (2) to provide a booklet for the use of students and community members about the historical life of this community. The account of life in The Ville from its settlement in the late 18th century to the present is taken from the records of institutions and from the memories of the people living in the neighborhood. The research was conducted through field methods that include participant observation in the community, analysis of historical documents, survey research conducted among a sample of the population, open ended interviews with community leaders, and the tape recording of oral histories with three generations of community residents. Through the use of this variety of research methods, the compilers of the document have put together a picture of a community over time and a record of the ethnic heritage of the people who created the community. (Author/RLV)

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the ville: the ethnic heritage of an urban neighborhood

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COVER—4277 Garfield, THE VILLE
measured drawing by Joe Bilello
scale: 1"=100 ft.

credit: R. A. Faber

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Prologue

The Ville, originally called Elleardsville, was settled in the mid-nineteenth century as a small, semi-rural area located in the northwest suburbs of the city of St. Louis. Charles Elleards, a horticulturist, selected a location for his estate and nursery adjacent to one of the oldest and most important roads in the area, old St. Charles Rock Road, which ran from the first capital of the State of Missouri to the city of St. Louis. By the time of Mr. Elleard's arrival, the path between St. Charles and St. Louis was dotted with inns and country estates. Mr. Elleards built his two-story brick home on Goode Avenue; his nursery stretched from Goode to Newstead and from Old St. Charles Rock Road (Easton –Dr. Martin Luther King) to Cote Brilliante. When the boundaries of the city of St. Louis were extended west from Grand Avenue to Skinker Boulevard in 1876, Elleardsville was annexed to the city.

Bounded today by Dr. Martin Luther King Drive, Taylor Avenue, St. Louis Avenue, and Sarah Street. The Ville is remembered as the center of a prosperous black community[1] in the twentieth century. From the opening of the Simmons School (1873), originally called the Elleardsville Colored School No. 8 on Claggett (St. Louis Avenue), The Ville gradually became a magnet community for churches, schools, colleges, and for black people who wished to own their homes. (V-4)

The importance of The Ville as a twentieth-century focus of institutional life is documented in the history of Simmons School, Sumner High School, Poro College, Velour Dry Goods Co., Whitlor Hardware & Bonded Warehouse, Lincoln Law School, Homer G. Phillips Hospital, and Stowe Teachers College. The incorporation of Antioch Baptist Church on May 6, 1884, and the building of St. James AME Church at Pendleton and St. Ferdinand in 1885 are indications of the existence of black institutions in this community before the turn of the century.

The oral histories of residents, who recall their parents' stories of The Ville, tell of the purchase of land and the building of homes by black people in The Ville before 1900.

> *My mother said, "If you want to marry me, you'll have to buy a house." So my father bought two lots and a coal yard and built a house on Kennerly. That was in 1887. My father paid $1800 for the house . . . it was a story and a half. The better class of colored people moved to The Ville when I was a child.* (V-11)

The memories of The Ville as a rural community are still vivid:

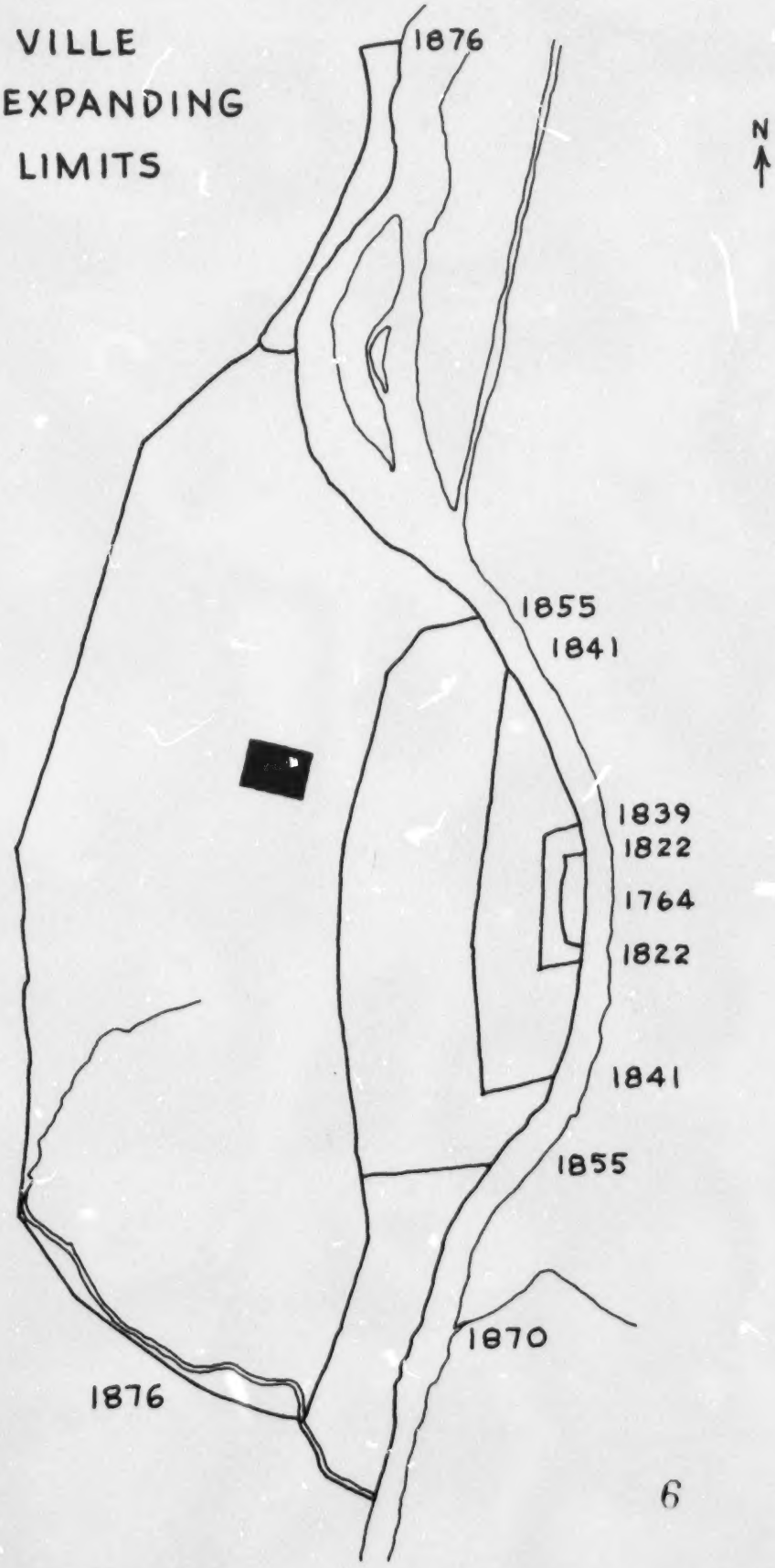
> *The streets were dirt or cobblestone. We had sprinkling carts – after the dirt we put crushed rock so the sprinkling cars came to keep down the dust. A man would come and drive his horses over the streets sprinkling water on the streets. The children would walk behind the carts to get wet. After the World's Fair of 1904, some of the streets were paved with brick and some with asphalt.* (V-5)

The Ville, today, houses several important social institutions, although the number of vacant lots has increased and the number of home owners has decreased. Sumner High School celebrated its one hundredth anniversary in this year (1974-1975.) Homer G. Phillips Hospital has withstood many proposals for its closure, and remains a major source of employment for black people. The success of the James House for the elderly, the persistence of active churches, and the willingness of many people to invest in the social institutions of The Ville have persisted.

The Ville has suffered, as has the city of St. Louis, from the flight of home owners to the county. The plight of an inner-city neighborhood is clearly described by present and former residents who have colorful and detailed memories of a rich community life in the past as well as realistic comments on the problems of the present.

The following account of life in The Ville from its settlement in the late nineteenth century to the present is taken from the records of institutions and from the memories of the people who created the neighborhood.

THE VILLE AND EXPANDING CITY LIMITS



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background-saint louis

To understand the settlement of The Ville, it is helpful to look at the growth of the black population in St. Louis from 1860 to 1920.

The black population of St. Louis in 1860 was approximately 3900, with free Blacks exceeding the number of slaves. Prior to the Civil War, Blacks with money and professions lived in St. Louis, a city which is said to have been "more conducive to free labor than to slavery" because of its diverse economic base and lack of the plantation history of large slave holdings.[2] In his pamphlet of 1858 on the colored aristocracy of St. Louis, Cyprian Clamorgan notes that free Blacks owned their own homes, traded with white merchants, and rented to white families.[3]

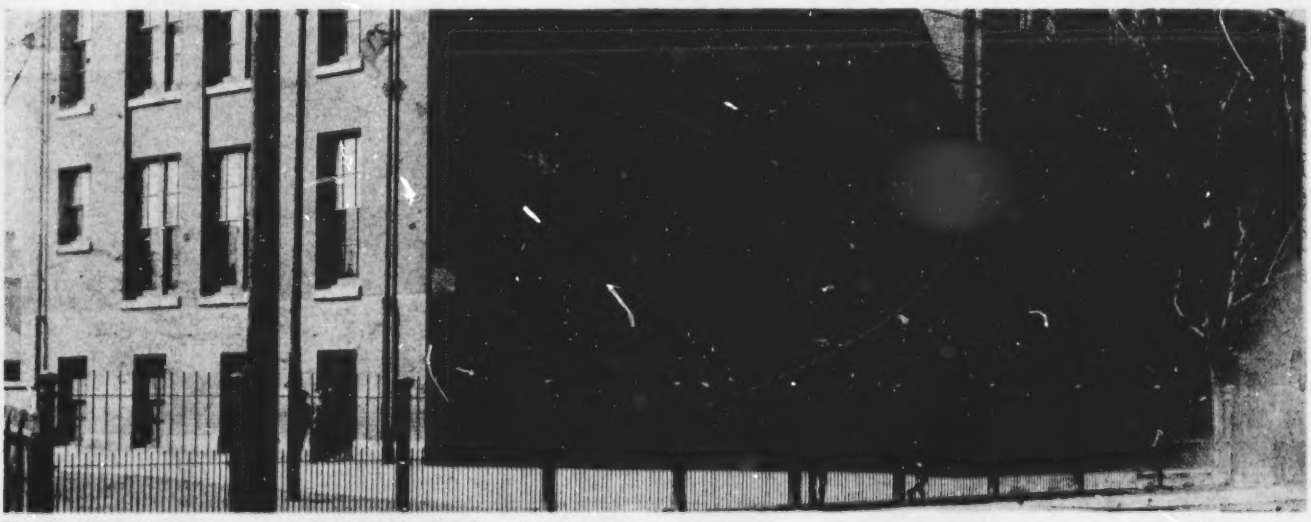
Clamorgan was intent on stressing the existing class system within the black community. He named and described a group of black business people and suggested their sources of wealth. He also noted the existence of a working or second class.

By 1880 the black population had grown to 22,000, exceeded only by New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. Unlike the segregated enclaves of black settlement after 1920, in 1890 black citizens lived in four wards and could be found in dispersed settlements on streets throughout the city.

"By 1900 it is evident from maps that the concentration of Negroes is increasing and that the concentrated area is extending westward. The Negroes are following at a distance the movement of the white population."[4] The majority of the Negroes in The Ville were said to be live-in servants prior to 1900, but "there were also two or three settlements of well-to-do Negroes on certain streets."[5]

The Ville was a varied rural community, "almost a village-like place with some estates," in 1884 when the Antioch Baptist Church was incorporated on May 6. A year later, St. James A.M.E. located in The Ville. The open land and the quiet, residential character of the area appear to have attracted home owners and churches by 1900, when St. Matthews Catholic Church and Holy Ghost Catholic Church appear in the St. Louis City Directory. The existence of these churches indicates that there were both black and white parishioners living in The Ville at this period. Oral histories document that there was a settlement of Germans and Blacks on Goode, Kennerly, St. Louis Avenue, Maffitt and Belle Glade.

Further evidence of black settlement was the opening of the Elleardsville School for Colored. The right to education for Blacks had been a subject of controversy in Missouri, where it was illegal to educate black children from 1846 until 1863, when the Freedman's Relief Society organized three schools. In 1865 a Board of Education for Colored Schools was established to supervise the education of black children.[6] The Elleardsville Colored School No. 8 was opened in 1873 on Claggett (St. Louis Avenue) in recognition of the settlement of black people in the Elleardsville area; the two-room frame school enrolled fifty-three pupils that year. Gradually, black teachers replaced white teachers in 1877. Mr. Charles Newton became the principal in 1877. Mr. Richard Cole, assistant, became the principal in 1878. The Elleardsville School for Colored was renamed the Simmons School in 1891, and a new brick building replaced the two-story frame structure in 1899. Simmons School still stands on St. Louis Avenue today – the same site for 102 years.



Simmons School c. 1900 credit: **privately owned**

Commercial facilities in The Ville were located on North Market, Goode at Cottage, and along St. Louis Avenue. Stores were specialized and more personal in the early 1900's, according to a long-time resident:

> *We loved to go to the store several times a day. They would always give you something. They would give you a caramel, or an apple, or a handful of peanuts. And there were the cars with vegetables and fruits. When you went to the butcher shop, it was nothing for the butcher to cut off several slices of bologna or a few wieners off the hank . . . they were hanging all around. He would slice them off and give them to the kids. He'd get patronage that way.* (V-5)

The social life was varied and exciting:

> *When we were old enough to go dancing, we went to Grant's Academy on Jefferson and Lawton and later to Kickers Hall on Newstead and North Market. For little affairs we went to each others' homes.* (V-11)

In addition to schools and churches, the residential potential of The Ville has been an important attraction of the neighborhood since its inception. Although many of the houses in the community were small cottages, home ownership was a value held by many Black Americans. According to Mr. Eugene Hughes, a long-time resident of The Ville, black people owned property on Lucky (Aldine), Garfield, North Market, St. Ferdinand, Cottage, Kennerly, St. Louis Avenue, Sarah, Belle Glade, and Goode.

> *Our playmates were German. We would sit down at our neighbor's table and eat coffee cake. On the corner there was an arc light. The men came once a week and cleaned the globe and put in a new stick of carbon. People were very honest. We would sleep with our doors and our windows open.* (V-5)

Commercial facilities and homes were intermingled, and the corner confectionery was a family institution. A small shopping area in The Ville was called Strams Square:

> *We had a little shopping center in The Ville. This was from St. Louis Avenue to Newstead. It was a complete little shopping center; had a drug store, shoe shop, dry goods store, all those kinds of little things.* (V-12)

Businesses owned by black residents in The Ville included the Mercantile Grocery on Pendleton and North Market, the Whitlor Moving and Storage Company on Taylor, Velar Dry Goods Store, Nevins Grocery, Catwell's Confectionary at Goode and Cottage, and Wardlow Grocery.

A former resident recalls the early days of settlement:

> *My dad had purchased a piece of ground in The Ville before 1900. It was considered way out. He built a brick home on this fifty-foot lot, and they moved in. It was a wedding present for my mother. The streetcar didn't go any further than Grand Avenue in those days. When we went to The Ville to live, it was open spaces. We could stand on the back porch and see to Easton Avenue. My mother could stand on her front porch and see the children playing in the Simmons School yard.* (V-5)

By the turn of the century, continued residential development in The Ville created the need for additional educational facilities.

The commencement of the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition, widely known as the St. Louis World's Fair, marked the beginning of a new period for The Ville. This Fair had a tremendous impact on St. Louis growth and population shifts. It brought direct economic growth and prosperity to the white community of St. Louis with the rapid construction of hotels, businesses, and houses. Just as the city as a whole was significantly influenced, so, too, was The Ville. In a discussion of how Simmons School began, it was written that about the time of the World's Fair, in 1904, it seemed like the whole city was moving to the western part of St. Louis, for classrooms, corridors, basements, and yards were filled to overflowing. In The Ville, boarding houses were opened to accommodate Blacks who came to the Fair, as Blacks were not admitted to the white hotels at the time. Although segregation in street cars did not exist in St. Louis, this was not the case on interstate service serving the patrons of the Fair. *Barney's Information Guide to St. Louis,* compiled in 1902 by the manager of the Bureau of Information for Union Station, contains only a list of "colored" schools in the city. No mention is made of any black churches, entertainment spots, or commercial enterprises.

The John Marshall School was built in 1900 in The Ville as an elementary school for white children. In 1918 it became an intermediate school for Negro children, and the first class graduated in 1919. John Mercer Langston was the first black principal. (The teachers were the Misses Maurice Williams, Mamie Hall, Josephine Harris, Lucy Washington, Margaret Wilkerson, Annie Bea Thomas, Sophoronia Richardson, Felicia Alexander, Helen Armstrong, Nannie Whitman, Marjorie Vashon, Selena Collins, and the Messrs. Sylvester Duvall, Madison Gray, and Frank B. Wilson.) In 1927 John Marshall became an elementary school for black children.

In 1910, the black population of Ward Twenty-Two, which included The Ville, was 3,108, approximately 13 per cent of the total population of the ward which was 23,253. At this period, black people made up approximately 6 per cent of the total population of the city. Between 1910 and 1920, the black population of St. Louis increased 60 per cent to approximately 70,000. By the 1920 census, The Ville is divided between two wards so that it is difficult to get an estimate to compare with the population in 1910. Sarah Street, a Ville boundary, is excluded from Ward Twenty, which encompassed the rest of The Ville.

The major influx of Blacks to St. Louis came from the rural South in search of work in northern urban centers.[7] With the increase in the black population in the cities, housing covenants which restricted the sale of individual property or, in some cases, of whole streets to whites only became a standard method to impede the access of black people to property ownership.

restrictive covenants

The race restrictive covenant, which is a "mutual agreement entered into by a group of property owners not to sell, rent, lease, or otherwise convey a property to Negroes or other particular minorities"[8] had special meaning for black people in St. Louis and for The Ville in particular.

On February 16th, 1911, thirty property owners on Labadie between Taylor and Cora Streets signed a covenant to restrict the use of property on the street to Caucasians. (We learn from oral histories and from the city directories that black people lived on Goode Avenue, Kennerly, St. Louis Avenue, and Enright before 1910.)

> *A large opening in the southern end of the Vandeventer wall, in the blocks between Enright and Cook which did not contain covenants, ushered in settlement by Negroes of the entire area west of Vandeventer to Taylor.*
>
> *A similar opening at Easton Avenue and Vandeventer permitted Negro settlement of the central part of this covenant quadrangle, in blocks along Taylor, Newstead, Pendleton, Goode, Whittier, and Sarah which contained property free of race restrictive agreements.*[9]

The conception of restrictive covenants was supported by the United Welfare Association and the Real Estate Exchange, who organized a campaign to petition the city aldermen "to make reasonable provisions requiring the use of separate blocks for residence by white and colored respectively."[10]

Although the *St. Louis Argus*, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, and the NAACP opposed the proposition of a city ordinance to enforce and legitimatize restrictive covenants based on race at a special election in 1916, an ordinance for segregation by restrictive covenant was passed by the people of the city of St. Louis. Although in 1917 the United States Supreme Court was to declare race restrictive covenants to be unconstitutional,[11] individual property owners succeeded in preventing black people from purchasing property freely throughout the city. Although restrictive covenants for whole blocks were ruled unconstitutional, individual property covenants were not outlawed until 1949.

Between 1910 and 1942, 378 race restrictive housing agreements were made in St. Louis. The covenants created a boundary at the western line of black settlement.[12]

The Ville is located near the center of the section in St. Louis where these racially restrictive housing covenants were enforced. The boundary for the covenants was, generally, Vandeventer Avenue on the east, Kingshighway Boulevard on the west, Washington on the south, and Carter Avenue on the north. There were some openings in various blocks; in particular, in the area of The Ville and also in the blocks between Enright and Cook.

With the enforcement of housing segregation and the movement of black institutions to The Ville, there were additional reasons to encourage families who wished to own homes to select The Ville.

The early history of The Ville reflects trends in the larger city. From a sparsely populated rural community, when it was incorporated into the city of St. Louis, The Ville became a residential neighborhood of small single-family homes, apartments, and multi family dwellings. The Irish and German immigrants to the city and the Black residents followed the westward population across Grand Avenue to the West End. Until 1900 there were few restrictions on purchase of property other than the ability to pay approximately two thousand dollars for a house and a lot.

Although later attempts to restrict the West End to prevent black settlement were successful, The Ville was an historic enclave of black home owners before the extension of these restrictions. The number of black residents in the area was small before 1920, yet the presence of black residences and the westward movement of the population combined to create a stable community of homes, churches and schools by 1910, when Sumner High School was moved to The Ville.

sumner high school

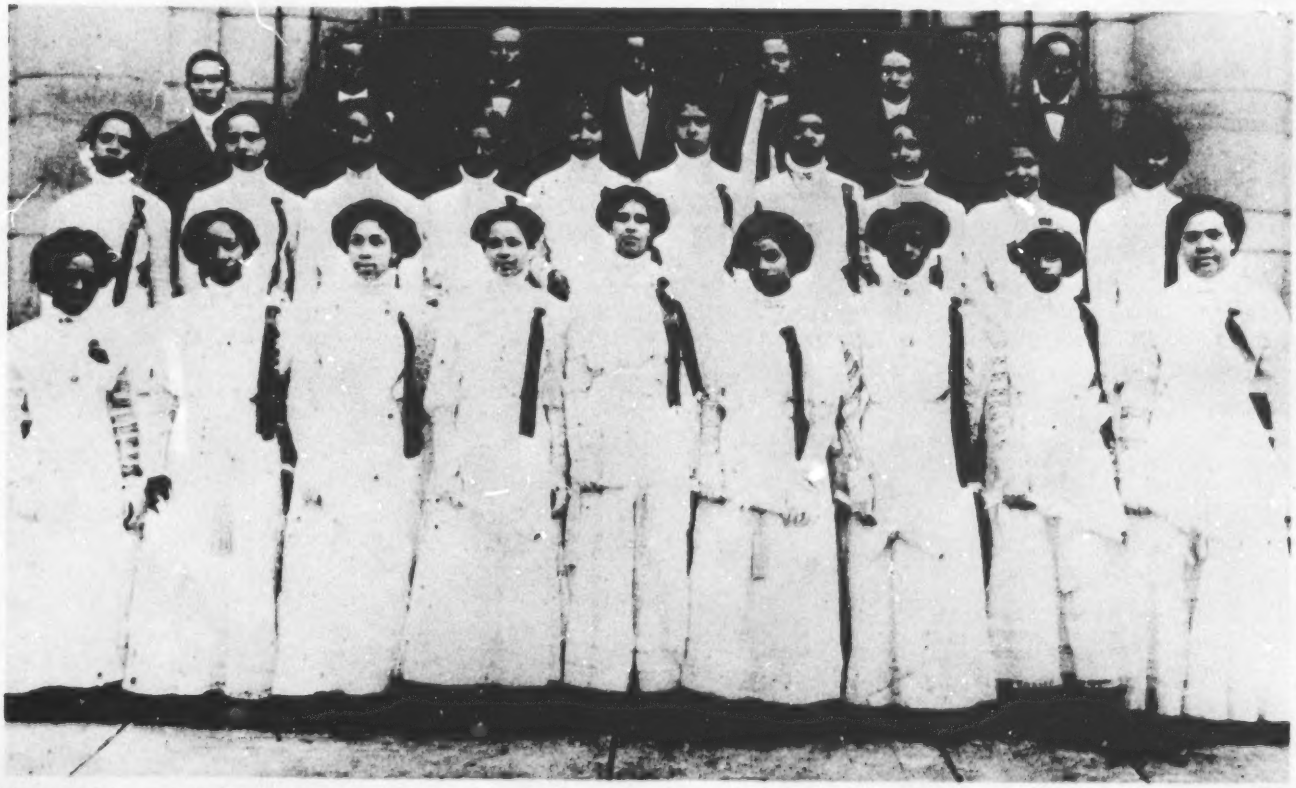
> Interviewer: *Was there a special reason why you selected this area [to build your house]?*
>
> Respondent: *Yes, because I had children and I wanted the best school for them . . . I was interested in bringing children up in the best environment that could be had. At that time, The Ville was the most outstanding neighborhood in St. Louis, because in this vicinity is where all the teachers lived and where all the better class of Negroes lived . . . Enright Avenue was a very popular place, but The Ville was the most outstanding.* (V-12)

Sumner High School, the first high school for black students west of the Mississippi, was established at Eleventh and Spruce Street in 1875. It was moved to Fifteenth and Walnut in 1895 to a neighborhood which soon became undesirable.

Sumner moved to The Ville because of the pressures from important members of the community who wanted a suitable surrounding for the education of their children. A group of concerned citizens, led by Mr. Charles H. Dodge and including the Reverend William D. Cook, the Reverend George Stevens of Central Baptist Church and Attorney Albert Burgess, petitioned the Board of Education for the relocation of Sumner High School from its site in the central business district when they learned that the Board planned to enlarge the high school at that location. The petition stated:

> *Firstly, the location and surroundings of the school are bad. There is no approach to the school except along avenues lined with demoralizing establishments . . . saloons and questionable houses. Being not far from Union Station, there is within a radius of five or six blocks from the school a congestion of drinking places and pool rooms. Our daughters, as they go to and from school, are exposed daily to the solicitations of the vile characters gathered about these centers of vice. Secondly, the neighborhood of Sumner High School is coming rapidly to be a business center. Already three large factories are within a stone's throw of the school's doors. The Colored population, though widely scattered throughout the city, is for the most part trending westward.*[13]

Sumner moved to the new building erected on Cottage Avenue in 1910. The demand for education was so great that frame classrooms were set up in the school yard the following year. In 1914, nine portable classrooms were added at Cottage and Pendleton. These facilities became the Cottage Avenue School, a demonstration school to train Sumner students who were attending the Normal School for teacher training. The Normal School, which was part of Sumner High School, was the forerunner of Stowe Teachers College.



Class of 1909, Sumner High School credit: *Argus*

The celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of Sumner High School in 1975 was a time to review the meaning of the school for the community. From the founding of the Simmons School in 1873, adoption of John Marshall School as an intermediate school in 1918, and the Turner School for the handicapped in 1925, The Ville was one of the few communities in St. Louis where black children could attend school from kindergarten through professional training.[14]

Two members of the graduating class of 1909 at Sumner live in The Ville today:

> *The graduating class at Sumner High School, June, 1909, was thirty three students. We still keep in touch today. Julia Davis, Mabel Burns, and I (Mrs. Percy Gentry) are the only ones who live in St. Louis. Three live out of St. Louis. There were twenty-four girls and nine boys in the class.*

The following conversation between Charles Bailey, graduate student, Washington University; John Buckner, Class of 1939; and Albert Jefferson, Class of 1918, was recorded at The Ville colloquium, May 4, 1975, at St. James A.M.E. Church:

Mr. Bailey: And now Mr. Buckner, class of 1939, and Mr. Jefferson, class of 1918, are going to have a little conversation about Sumner when they were there.

Mr. Buckner: Well, I think you have two or three things of significance that probably ought to be said. First given the fact that you had a school that was the first for Blacks ostensibly, in this nature, then you're not talking about Sumner High School at this one-hundredth year, but really you're talking about education of Negroes on the secondary level in this country. Secondly, since Sumner was started in 1875, then we're talking about ten years after Civil War; we're talking about a time when most Negroes didn't even go to school . . . here was a school that was started on the secondary level and, incidentally, it has been on the secondary level all of the time, all of the 100 years. And it's been named Sumner all of the 100 years, as opposed to many kinds of schools that have changed and whatnot. I think those are significant. Now, the greatest thing that I say about Albert Jefferson's day and about my day is that there was quality education, excellence in education at Sumner High School and, largely, would you say, Albert, with black teachers?

Mr. Albert Jefferson: It was unusual for a Black to go to high school when I was going. There were so many when they got an eighth-grade education, they said, "he's smart – he had an eighth-grade education." But eighth-grade education was almost comparable with a high school education today, because even in the seventh and eighth grades sometimes they taught algebra. But Sumner was almost brand new when I started there.

They had a good faculty like Dr. Turner and Mr. Rhetta. And they didn't have so many elective studies that you almost had a four-year course of English. which I think is the basis of the culture. If you can't express yourself–and then you didn't just have a little smattering of science or general science, but you had Botany, and Physiology I and II; you had Physics I and II; you had Chemistry; then you had English, Latin, and German. I often regret that they didn't teach a modern language, Spanish or French. Later I had to go to night school and get that. And as a matter of fact, when I think of the distances I had to go, we had to get up earlier in the morning and I'd stand at Grand and Easton; to me that was the coldest spot in St. Louis.

Mr. Buckner: Did you have two or three cars, two or three transfers?

Mr. Jefferson: I had three cars and transfers coming from Carondelet to go to Sumner High School.

Mr. Buckner: It was the only high school. For whites, it wasn't much better, because 1918–and, incidentally, did you notice, Charles, that Albert's talking as though this was yesterday? And this has been my experience. I know a few years ago when I was the principal at Sumner we sent to several hundred Sumner graduates and asked about Sumner teachers. We were trying to get the one hundred most influential or best or however you would say it–most outstanding Sumner teachers–and everybody we talked to gave us right away, "Oh, there was this guy and the other one." I remember getting from Maudelle Brown Bousefield–Mrs. Bousefield was the first Negro administrator in the Chicago public schools. She was the first elementary school principal, also the first high school principal. She was the principal of Wendell Phillips for many years. Mrs. Bousefield said, "Why John, there were teachers, Mr. Clark, Miss Easton . . " She named them right away. She said, "But remember, I'm talking about 1900-1902," when she was there. But you have had, over the years, many, many outstanding – not only outstanding, but dedicated – faculty members. Oh, if we could get in schools today that same kind of dedication.

Mr. Jefferson: That's true, because when I think of those days, the handicaps. You take in the field of football; they couldn't play any high school in St. Louis. They could play from Memphis, or Louisville, or New Orleans, or Kansas City–but the school spirit, you couldn't beat it.

Mr. Buckner: Talking about football, this is Sumner's seventy-fifth year of football. They've been playing football since 1900. You'd be interested to know that in those days, as Albert was talking about, they had to play colleges, Fisk and Lincoln. In fact, Lincoln University has never beaten Sumner High School. Eventually they met and decided it was beneath the dignity of a college to play a high school, because they had never beaten Sumner. And here you are, this year, too, with the teams that were vying for the championship in basketball and in football. And I think the track team has just about won it for this year; we'll know the next week.

Mr. Bailey: Now we talked about the outstanding teachers and also the football team, but I was thinking–Sumner being so outstanding in their earlier years, what about cultural affairs? Where did black people go for plays, for other kinds of cultural events? Was Sumner an institution where this took place?

Mr. Buckner: The Sumner High School has had an organized dramatics program since 1912. They've had outstanding people there. You will recall, Albert, Mr. Watts, Mr. and Mrs. Dreer.

The educational institutions in The Ville, beginning with elementary schools in the 1880's and highlighted by Sumner High School's location at Cottage and Pendleton in 1910, were the cornerstones on which much of the community was built. At a time when education was limited for black people, the only high school which accepted black children was located in this community, followed by the only hospital which would train black physicians and the first teachers college for black students. This remarkable assemblage of institutions brought many professionals to live in The Ville and on the adjacent streets of Enright and West Belle. The beginning of the rich community life which characterized the twenties, thirties, and forties was associated with the schools and churches in this period.

The increasing segregation of Blacks into enclaves encouraged the tendency of businesses and institutions to cluster in established neighborhoods in which a stable, home-owning black population had settled. The Ville was a neighborhood of home owners. The early settlement of black families in the area preceded the restrictive covenants. The placement of Simmons Elementary School and Sumner High School in The Ville was further evidence of a community commitment to black families.

PORD COLLEGE
PENDLETON AVE.
ST. FERDINAND AVE.

Annie malone

Poro College at Poro Corner was a landmark in The Ville from its opening in 1917 until its founder, Mrs. Annie Turnbo Pope Malone, moved to Chicago in 1930. The manufacturing of beauty products which Mrs. Malone started with the "wonderful hair grower," a preparation for hair and scalp, grew into a multi-faceted business which included a training school for agents in the use of the products, a manufacturing plant, and a social center for The Ville and the black community of St. Louis.[15]

In 1906 the *St. Louis Palladium*, a newspaper serving the black community, ran an advertisement for the "Poro System," the name Mrs. Annie copyrighted as her trade name for the beauty products she sold. Soon she expanded the business and moved from a small store on 2223 Market to larger quarters at 3100 Pine. In 1913, Mrs. Pope married Aaron Eugene Malone, principal of the Lincoln Public School in Quincy, Illinois, and toured the West following their wedding. Upon her return, the ground was broken for Poro College at St. Ferdinand and Pendleton Avenues in The Ville.

By 1920 Poro College included a main building of three stories to house the instructional department and beauty parlor, an auditorium, general offices, a cafeteria, dining room, sewing shop, guest rooms, a dormitory, two emergency rooms for first-aid treatment, a roof garden, and an apartment for Mr. and Mrs. Malone. An annex provided shipping and other functions. In the beauty parlor and instruction department, lessons in hair and scalp care, the manufacture of hair pieces, manicuring, and massage were given. A ten-day review course was offered to agents who sold the Poro products throughout the country.[16]

For the residents of The Ville, Poro College provided 175 jobs. Because of its proximity to Sumner High School, students found work at the College. Religious, fraternal, civic, and social organizations used the Poro buildings. The Frederick Douglas Post Office was in the complex, also. The officers of the National Negro Business League had their headquarters at Poro College in 1927. Following the St. Louis tornado of 1927, thousands of storm sufferers were sheltered, clothed, and fed through Poro College, which served as one of the principal relief units of the American Red Cross.

> *The social life [of The Ville in the 1920's] revolved around Mrs. Malone and Poro. Mrs. Malone was very proud of being black. In the summer they would have garden parties on the roof [of Poro College]. She spent her money right here in St. Louis. I remember hearing Ethel Waters at Poro College. There was a restaurant. One of the things I remember was their marvelous vegetable soup. And they had a bakery.* (V-6)

In July, 1930, marking the further expansion of Poro College, the institution was moved to Chicago. The main building in St. Louis became a hotel in 1931. In 1937 following a dispute concerning the admission of Blacks to the law school at the University of Missouri, Lincoln Law School rented the building to train black law students.

> *When Mrs. Malone brought the college to The Ville, she brought all this prestige with her. With her first money she built the orphans' home and a nursery school. Poro College was located near Sumner. It was a great opportunity for our race. It was a regular education center.* (V-12)

Mrs. Annie Turnbo Pope Malone, one of the few self-made women millionaires in the history of the city, is a legend to many people in St. Louis.

the twenties

The Annie Malone Children's Home was founded in 1888 by Mrs. Sarah Newton, who aroused the interest of other black women in the community to provide a home which would care for orphans, half-orphans, neglected, and dependent children. It was organized as the St. Louis Colored Orphans' Home.[17] The first Home was located at 1427 North Twelfth Street on ground purchased by black soldiers after the Civil War for a soldier's home that was not built. In 1905 the Home was moved to Natural Bridge and, finally, because of the gift of money and land at Goode, Cottage, and Kennerly by Mrs. Annie Malone, the home was constructed at its present location in The Ville.

The new building, dedicated on May Day, 1922, provided care for thirty-five children between the ages of five and fourteen. In 1946, the Home was renamed for Mrs. Malone. At the present time the Home serves children who are dependent or neglected. It is supported by the United Fund and by the Annie Malone May Day Parade, the only annual fund raising event.

The Annie Malone May Day Parade has been described as a "grand occasion where [black] people all over St. Louis had an annual get together. It was a matter of pride. It was one of the most outstanding social events of the black calendar."[18]

This year thousands of people, young and old alike, lined the parade route as they have done annually to watch the Annie Malone Children's Parade. Each unit in the parade was charged a fee. There were units representing various businesses in the community, fraternal organizations, scout groups, social clubs, sporting clubs, school band units, and service agencies. On the corner of Page and Taylor, the May Day Parade, nearly fifty years old, "is a time for reunion for people who lived in The Ville," said Mr. Albert Jefferson.

credit: *Argus* · **Chuck Finney**

Memories of the early parades are still vivid.

> *They used to always have the big parade where everybody in The Ville if you had a little nickel band or nickel drum and bugle corps, you'd get out and put on a uniform and march. Only in The Ville, and you only went down Aldine Avenue. It never went down Easton Avenue . . . And it would come up Cote Brilliante and would go all the way down to Vandeventer . . . and then it circled around and came up two or three streets.* (V-2)

The money raised on this celebration day was the major source of income for the Annie Malone Children's Home.

The cultural life in The Ville in the 1920's was varied and rich. In 1922 the Elleardsville Branch of the YMCA was opened at Pendleton and St. Ferdinand, opposite Poro College. The opening of the branch in The Ville was further evidence of the recognition that this community was a center of social life for black people. The Y offered ping pong, checkers, competitive sports between Elleardsville and the Pine Street Branch (such as baseball, football, soccer, and tennis).

Trips for sledding at Art Hill and Chain of Rocks, in addition to visits to Cliff Cave and Camp River Cliff, were part of the program. Mr. Thomas Marshall, one of the first secretaries of the Pine Street "Y," the YMCA for black residents, served as a big brother at the Elleardsville Y, as did Mr. Spencer All.[19]

To offer opportunities for theatrical experience, the Aldridge Players was organized on April 17, 1927, by Frederick O'Neal. Mrs. Ethel Bowl, the first director, produced plays which were shown at the Poro College auditorium, the St. James Church, and Vashon High School, the second high school for black students, which was opened in 1927. "Dixie Love," an operetta, was one of the best remembered productions, according to Mrs. Mercedes Cunningham and Mrs. Hattie Daniels, both former residents of The Ville, who were members of the Aldridge Players.[20]

In the following oral history, a resident of The Ville remembers the community of the 1920's when her parents bought a home on Kennerly. (V-35)

> *We were in The Ville, within walking distance of schools that we would attend, the church to which we belonged, Poro College, all kinds of businesses, including German bakery shops and one Greek candy kitchen. This street was integrated to a small degree. Our home is on the north side of Kennerly. We were the second Negro family to on it. The south side contained three Negro families. Our presence met with opposition from the Irish residents. Threats were made against our lives. While repairs and improvements were made, my father stayed in the house. Although a peaceful man, he slept armed with a shotgun.*
>
> *There was no doubt about it, we were considered intruders by members of the St. Matthew's parish, mostly Irish and Italian. The restrictive covenant was losing its grip. The*

Real Estate Exchange and other power groups decided where Negroes could and must live. Their financing was most difficult to obtain. Our white neighbors, for the most part, were poorly educated, blue-collar workers. An emergency caused a change in attitude. One of the children had become critically ill. The family had no phone. Neither did their white neighbors. It was necessary to contact a doctor. My mother graciously offered the use of our telephone.

Our father had playground equipment designed, built, and installed in our back yard. The white children forgot that we were Protestant and that we were racially different. It was sad to watch their faces as we played. In time, the ice was broken, and they were invited to join the outdoor fun.

The telephone was a luxury that many Ville residents could not afford. Teenagers carried on their long conversations with friends by walking to the friend's home. Come, join me in a short walk. Let's walk west on Kennerly Avenue. When we reach Pendleton, we will turn south. The year could be in the middle 1920's. Pendleton Avenue has been paved with asphalt. This feat was accomplished by the influence and at the insistence of Mrs. Annie Turbo Malone, the famous Afro-American woman who built Poro College. She was largely responsible for creating high standards for The Ville. Along the tree-lined street we see business structures, brick and frame cottages with well-cared lawns, joined brick flats and a few two-story residences.

The first business of interest to young people was on Cottage Avenue. The little place around the corner was owned and operated by Mr. C. W. Coleman. Mr. Coleman created the multiple-dip ice cream cone. Sandwiches were also sold. Trapman's Used Clothing Store was on the east side of Pendleton near St. Ferdinand. Dr. Oral McClellan had his offices and living quarters on the second floor.

We have reached Pendleton and St. Ferdinand Avenues. Here we find [have reached] the hub of The Ville. On the northwest corner of Pendleton and St. Ferdinand is St. James A.M.E. Church. On the southwest corner stands the great Poro College. The building on the southeast corner of St. Ferdinand and Pendleton housed the Elleardsville YMCA branch.

Poro College rented store space on Pendleton Avenue. There was a fine barber shop operated by Mr. Louis A. Bell and Poro Ice Cream Parlor. We would go there between Sunday School and church for ice cream. The The millinery shop was owned by Mrs. Georgia Thomas. All women's hats were custom made. In addition to the main building and annex, Mrs. Malone owned blocks of property and a tennis court in The Ville.

Approaching Pendleton and North Market, we find other businesses owned and operated by Negroes. On the northeast corner was Morgan's Drug Store. It was a wonderful meeting place for youth. Here were sold delicious milk shakes, ice cream sundaes and, best of all, penny candies. The Whitlar Furniture Store was on the southeast corner of North Market and Pendleton Avenue.

Across the street, on the southwest corner, buildings were erected by Dr. A. W. Cheatham for businesses, his office, and a two-family flat. The first floor, 4300 North Market, was occupied by the Velars Dry Goods Store. The second originally housed the offices of Dr. Cheatham and Dr. Charles Harriett. Later this space became living quarters for the family of Dr. and Mrs. A. W. Cheatham. Their address was 4300a North Market. The flats were 4202, 4304 North Market. His commercial one-story buildings on Pendleton, the west side, extended to the alley. They included McCrary's Meat Market, Orchid Beauty Parlor, Woodward Vegetable Market, and a shoe shine parlor.

Mr. A. D. Wardlow built his grocery store in 1914 at 4306 North Market. It was constructed by a Negro contractor named Oral Stubblefield. This was the second grocery owned in The Ville by a Negro. The residence at 4308 North Market had formerly been a farm house. The property was part of the Wash estate. We shall now return to Pendleton Avenue, the west side.

Across the alley was a small filling station owned and operated by Mr. Lomax. At Garfield and Pendleton was Broomers Tailoring and Dry Cleaning Shop. Mr. Broomer sponsored a baseball team. Dr. Cheatham had also erected one-story commercial buildings on the east of Pendleton from the alley extending to Garfield. There was a Chinese restaurant, one beauty shop, and Larkins' shoe repair shop on the corner.

There was a Jewish-owned grocery and meat market on the southeast corner of Cote Brilliante and Pendleton Avenues. It is possible to meet and chat with many friends, old and young, along the way. A few businesses were located on Lucky Street, now called Aldine. The first floral shop in The Ville was at 4269 West Aldine. It was built and owned and operated by Mrs. Harris, whose oldest daughter, Dr. Ruth M. Harris, became in charge of Stowe Teachers College. After integration laws were passed, she taught courses in education at Washington University. Students of the John Marshall School, 4342 Aldine, made it possible for two confectioneries to operate successfully. These stores faced the school on the north side of Aldine. Each was built and owned by women, Mrs. Grady and Mrs. R. Q. Wright. Incidentally, the stores were built as additions to their residences.

From the oral history of another former resident, one captures the life in The Ville ten years later:

The Ville was where most of the outstanding blacks lived. And you felt you were somebody if you lived west of Grand. See, you weren't too much if you lived east of Grand at that time. But some of the most outstanding people, black, were west of Grand and in this area. Many of the high school teachers lived in the area. Of course, there was Mrs. Malone and Poro College and also the orphans' home. Many of the activities that we would have, like plays and concerts and things would be here [in The Ville].

The Aldridge Players were in The Ville. They were made of a comparatively young group of people, and one of the most outstanding persons that has come out of the Aldridge Players today is Fred O'Neal. I think he is well known. He was one of the persons who organized the Actors' Guild. (V-12)

Jesse Johnson, an old citizen of St. Louis, he was the first Negro who was able to get a boat that Negroes were able to use. We'd go on the boat on Monday night. That was the only night you could go on the boat . . . If you wanted to take your girl on the boat, you had to take her out on the St. Paul on Monday night. Then we had the Coliseum, where we had professional dancing and social affairs. These things I'm telling you happened way back, all the way back from 1925 to the forties.

A resident of fifty years recalls the quality of life in The Ville.

The Ville is a unique neighborhood within the total community. In the early years people who lived here possessed all levels of education and were on all economic levels. They bought property within the area so that their children could receive quality education. This would prepare them for a better future. Strong and close family ties gave the children love, a sense of responsibility to one's self, his family, his community and to his country. Beside the home, various churches within The Ville cared for our spiritual needs. We were people who enjoyed socializing and participating in recreational activities. Recreation began within the family unit.

Friday evening in our home was set aside as "fun" night. My father came home early from the office. During the pre-teen years we enjoyed chili parties, making fudge, birthday parties, pulling taffy, popping corn, and making candy apples. Guests were always welcome. Various games were played. There was always music. Most homes had a piano, so we could listen to tunes and have sing-a-longs. Most of us took music lessons. My father was an excellent pianist. Victrolas, and later the radio, enabled us to listen to all kinds of music.

The social activities in The Ville were the result of the growing ability of the Negro to build his own institutions. The problems which Blacks experienced during the late twenties and thirties are recorded in the following oral history:

There was a time when you couldn't even buy a hot dog sandwich downtown. You couldn't go to the dime store and to the counter and buy a hot dog. Mr. Henry Wheeler and a group of us picketed the stores downtown and the theaters to get the privilege of going to the shows. The first time that a Negro show came into St. Louis it was at the American Theater, and we would have to go up in the gallery to see the show. A lot of us got mad about it and we decided to start fighting. We organized the Colored Clerks Circle (in 1941).

Further evidence of the quality of life in The Ville comes from the memory of another former resident:

We moved to The Ville in 1923 . . . I think the thing that made The Ville unique was that there were so many one-story homes in it, little cottages where people lived in single families. We liked the area, and it was an area where everybody took a lot of pride in their places. I mean, on Saturday you'd see all the youngsters and oldsters scrubbing the steps and sweeping and cleaning even the gutters and that sort of thing. People liked flowers. Many people had beautiful flower gardens and some people had food gardens. As I look back on it now it seems to me that most people were just ordinary, poor people. Of course, I might get a lot of debate on that, because maybe some people thought they were affluent. I think the most affluent were possibly the school teachers. There might have been a few doctors and a few lawyers, postal employees, railway porters, and mail clerks . . . just plain everyday working people.

In The Ville you could find black-owned drug stores; there was dry a goods store, a rather small department store, you might call it. It was owned by the Wilkerson family. That was at Compton and North Market . . ., McCrary's had a meat market there later.

What I think gave The Ville a big life was when Annie Malone built Poro College in The Ville. That was the property that is now occupied by the James House. (V-12)

institutional expansion

The Turner Middle School, presently located at 4235 West Kennerly Avenue, was formally named Charles Henry Turner Open Air School for Handicapped Children in honor of Dr. Charles Henry Turner, a black scientist who specialized in the study of insects. On November 10, 1908, Dr. Turner was employed as a teacher of biology at Sumner High School. The school was built in 1925 by the St. Louis Board of Education to meet the educational needs of black, crippled, and handicapped children. Prior to 1924, there were several special schools for crippled and handicapped white children, but none existed for black children. As a result of concerned citizens and parents, the Charles Henry Turner Open Air School was built and was considered the only school in St. Louis that was structured and equipped to meet most of the special needs of children within one school.

The Turner Open Air School was, and remains today, a two-story brick building equipped with ramps and railings instead of stairways and an open air department for children who had been exposed to tuberculosis. The department was named open air because the children were to be exposed to daily "fresh" air throughout the year as a part of their treatment. The rooms had French doors which remained open throughout classes, often requiring teachers and children to remain warmly clad in coats, gloves, hats, and wool leggings.

There was one large dining room with two cooks. One main meal, including a vegetable, dairy product, meat, or fish, was served to all children. The tuberculosis-exposed children were given three meals per day—cereal and milk in the mornings, full meal at lunch, and milk and crackers for a snack before leaving school.

The courses offered at the Open Air School were comparable to regular school courses. The goal of the school and each teacher was to keep the child at grade level with regular and appropriate academic work and performance and to see that their bodies would be improved. Manual training and home economics courses were offered and required for both girls and boys.

The Open Air School attempted to teach the public that the children were human beings, not to be pitied, but given a chance to perform to capacity. Children were referred to the Open Air School by doctors and parents. There were no fees. Two buses picked up black children from all over the city.

The black children who attended the Open Air School came from a variety of backgrounds and graduated from the school to become doctors, teachers, cabinet makers, commercial artists, mechanics, and lawyers. One of the first graduates of the Open Air School is currently a physical education teacher at Sumner High School. He was a polio victim. The first principal of the Turner Open Air School was John Purnell.

With the passing of desegregation laws in 1954, the Open Air School continued but was eventually phased out around 1960-61. White special schools, such as Elias Michael, were opened to black children at this time.

When the Harriet Beecher Stowe College was approved as the name of the teacher training institution for female black students in 1929, it was the anniversary of a plan that was seeded in the Normal Department of Sumner High School in 1890.[21]

In September, 1890, the St. Louis Board of Education approved the creation of a Normal Department in Sumner High School, located at that time at Fifteenth and Walnut. The normal training, organized by the principal, Oscar Waring, provided for one year beyond high school. Because black teachers were not allowed to teach white children, the places of employment for Sumner graduates were limited. Fourteen young women received the normal diploma at the end of the school year in 1891. In order to reduce the number of qualified candidates for the few teaching positions, the St. Louis Board instituted an apprentice system and limited the size of the class accepted in the normal training in 1904.[22]

With the move of Sumner to The Ville, many teachers who were employed in the normal program moved to The Ville also. Among the teachers responsible for the teaching program in 1920, Dr. Ruth Harris and Miss Grace Nichols lived in the community.

In 1921, the Board of Education ordered that training of black teachers in the Sumner Normal Course should be equal to the training of white teachers offered at Harris Teachers College.

In addition, it was ruled that teachers could, by extension work, earn sufficient credit for an A.B. degree. In 1925, Sumner Normal School was designated as a college, although it continued to be housed in the Sumner High School building. The 1929 graduating class at Sumner Teachers College was the first to receive the bachelor's degree in education.

During the next year, Sumner Teachers College was moved to a new wing in the Simmons School. The Board of Education changed the name of the school to Harriet Beecher Stowe College under the principalship of E. D. Hamilton. In 1931, registration soared from 271 students to 531 because a change in the regulations allowed young men and women who did not wish to teach to take courses offered to freshmen and sophomores at the college. This successful program was discontinued by the Board of Education in 1932 because of a lack of funds. In 1933, Lincoln University established a junior college division at Stowe Teachers College under the Public Works Administration Program. A faculty separate from Stowe was employed to teach the courses offered in the freshman and sophomore curriculum at Lincoln University.

During the years 1937 to 1939, there was pressure from the community and the college to provide more adequate building facilities than those available at Simmons. Meetings were held at the Kennerly Avenue Church to urge the Board of Education to appropriate money for a new college building. The Board approved the construction of a new college which was built on Cottage, Pendleton, and Kennerly, opposite Tandy Park, at an estimated cost of $375,000.

In 1940, Dr. Ruth Harris was appointed president of Stowe Teachers College, a position which she held until the merger with Harris Teachers College in 1954. Dr. Harris was a teacher at the Cottage Avenue Demonstration School and at Sumner Teachers College before she became Dean of Women at Stowe.

To The Ville, Stowe Teachers College was one of the links in the cluster of institutions which offered higher education to black students. The concentration of institutions encouraged the movement of teachers to The Ville. The availability of small homes and the presence of a small group of educated people added to the image of the community as a stable and desirable place to live. In the 1940s the continuing existence of restrictive covenants and segregated schools made the access of black people to other neighborhoods and other schools very limited. Stowe College was combined with Harris Teachers College in 1954, when the Supreme Court decision on May 17 ended segregation in public schools.

the depression

The Depression engulfed the black community in St. Louis as it did the country as a whole in the 1930's. While many members of the community worked to increase access to educational institutions and hospitals for black citizens, jobs were the critical need. From 1927 until the early forties, The *St. Louis Argus*, *The Standard News*, and *The St. Louis Call*, newspapers which served the black community, ran a campaign to alert citizens to the buying power of Blacks and to the opportunities for business for young people.

The newspapers ran a survey of the locations of stores in the predominantly black residential areas. "The purpose of this survey is to stimulate business among our people and to secure employment for members of the race in stores throughout St. Louis catering to the colored trade."[23]

Because The Ville was a black residential neighborhood by 1930, the stores along St. Louis Avenue, Easton, and Sarah served black people as well as white residents of adjacent areas. The newspaper campaigns were directed to the equation of black trade with black employment. "It is to be noted that fourteen stores on Easton Avenue with 50 per cent colored trade and twenty-seven employees have one Negro porter. Why? You can answer it if you will."[24]

In 1934, the St. Louis Urban League[25], under the leadership of John T. Clark, organized the St. Louis Emergency Advisory Council for Negroes. It was the purpose of the Council to monitor the distribution of jobs which were offered by federal programs and to pressure businesses which depended on Negro trade to hire Negroes. Of the seven members of the Council, four lived in The Ville and three lived on Enright and Cook, adjacent to The Ville.

The 1930 census indicates that the majority of residents of The Ville worked at service occupations. This fact was to change very little during the next ten years. In an analysis of the occupations of Negroes in the city in 1930, we learn that 70 per cent of the Negro residents of the city were in service occupations, whereas only 2 per cent were in professional and managerial roles. Although the city as a whole offered few professional roles to Negroes, 11 per cent of the population of The Ville in 1940 was professional.

The Urban League's involvement in jobs for Negroes prompted the proposition of a city code which would set the minimum wage for domestic service at $1.50 and car fare per day or $5.00 and car fare per week.[26] Clark's success in the organization of committees to monitor the job market for St. Louisans caused the Urban League to invite him to set up the national program on industrial development for the Urban League.

Although jobs were hard to find, education was becoming more available. Sumner High School graduated a record class of 170 members in 1930. The Richard Cole Elementary School was opened at 3947 Enright. Richard C. Cole, the second principal of the Simmons School, whose stewardship extended for fifty years, lived at 4210 West Belle.

The preservation of the residential character of The Ville was another area of great concern to black people who owned their own homes in the area of The Ville and the adjacent streets of Cook, West Belle and Enright. Concern over the zoning of the city and the protection of black residential areas consolidated in the early 1930's. The Urban League responded by forming the Federation of Block Units in 1932. In letters to the City Plan Commission, Clark alerted the chairman, Harlan Bartholemew, to improper usage of areas which, although assigned a multi-dwelling zoning designation, were being used for commercial and industrial establishments. The Federation of Block Units was organized, specifically to protect the residential value of the black neighborhoods. By 1936, forty-five blocks were organized. Much to the concern of residents, the Zoning Committee of the City Plan Commission prepared studies in 1938 which designated the Tandy area, which contained The Ville, as blighted. These studies also recommended that the area, which contained many homes owned by black citizens, receive a change of zoning from residential to commercial and industrial.

In response to this challenge, the Federation circulated information on zoning to block unit members in an effort to preserve the residential neighborhoods. In a call issued in April, 1936, residents were warned:

> *The City Plan Commission is beginning to rezone the whole city of St. Louis. If your block of residents is classified as a multiple dwelling area and you and your neighbors wish to protect it as a quiet residential area and retain its valuation for residential purposes and do not wish to have an increase of boarding houses, private clubs or possibly hotels or large apartments, it will be necessary to obtain the consent of the large majority of property owners in your block to request of the City Plan Commission that they change your area from multiple dwelling zone to a residence zone. (Urban League Papers)*
>
> *Because Negro citizens do not usually act in a collective way concerning such community functions, Negro residential areas are ruined and property values fall.*

Of the twenty-one blocks which responded to the call for action before the Plan Commission, nine were in The Ville. The others were on the adjacent blocks of Enright, West Belle, and Cook. The petitioning had little effect on the Commission. The multiple dwelling, commercial, and industrial designations persisted despite the dominance of single family homes in the area.

In a letter to Harlan Bartholemew in 1946, Clark noted that the area west of Grand Avenue which is occupied by Negroes is designated as a blighted area:

> *Will you kindly give us a definition of what is blighted, if the majority of property in the area you mentioned is owned by Negro residents. In fact, I live in this area myself and realize the property is old, but a well-constructed house, and I don't believe by any stretch of the imagination that you could call this property blighted. I am sure many of our group and individuals are going to seek an explanation of blighted areas, and we are going to be called upon to give an answer. (letter, December 3, 1946)*

The 1947 City Plan for St. Louis illustrates the problem of the residents of the Tandy area and, therefore, The Ville. Old dwelling units were assumed to be decayed. Very little understanding was shown of the nature of neighborhood social units or of the community of home owners which existed in the area. Although there was a determined effort to preserve the black residential neighborhood and to place on the Plan Commission a black person who would have some awareness of the black housing areas and needs, the effort met with little success.

Until 1932, black citizens of St. Louis had voted with the Republican Party, although their representation in the state and local offices suggests very little payoff for them. Although a few black committee people were elected in the twenties to represent wards which were contiguous with black neighborhoods, there were no black aldermen elected until 1943. Although Charles Turpin ran for alderman in the 1920's and amassed a considerable vote, this office was elected at large, and black citizens did not have enough city-wide votes to carry a candidate.

It was not until 1943, when the city charter changed the process of aldermanic election to ward voting, that Jasper C. Caston, a black candidate, was elected. Ward boundaries changed frequently in the city. The Ville was part of the Twentieth Ward in the 1930's. The aldermanic representative was Wilbur C. Schwarz. In the redistricting in the 1940's The Ville was in the Fourth Ward. Following the 1943 charter change, the alderman from The Ville was Joseph Saputo, who lived on 615 North Eighth Street.[44]

In the 1930's the black community had some political influence with the city administration. Among the influential members of the black community in this area were Attorney George L. Vaughn and Jordan W. Chambers, who led black voters to the Democratic Party in 1932, and Homer G. Phillips, who fought the battle to place City Hospital No. 2 in The Ville rather than to allow it to be an annex of the old City Hospital.

homer g. phillips

In St. Louis on June 18, 1931, a 51-year-old lawyer rose at 7:00, had breakfast, said good-bye to his wife, and left his home at 1121 Aubert Avenue. Noted for his punctuality, he walked southward on Aubert to Delmar at 7:45 a.m. to take a streetcar to his office at 23 North Jefferson.

He stopped to buy a newspaper. As he waited for his streetcar and read his paper, two men approached. The first walked up and said something to him. The lawyer lowered his paper. The first man struck him in the face and then drew an automatic, firing several shots into him. The lawyer fell, and the two men ran north to an alley and east in the alley.[27]

Two persons were later arrested for the murder, but freed. The murder of Homer G. Phillips is still officially unsolved; and the motive remains as much a mystery today as it was forty-four years ago.

Phillips was a prominent figure in civic and public life of St. Louis, although he never held public office. He was a stalwart Republican, yet his independence once led him against a local mayoralty ticket. His determined and intelligent leadership for the new city hospital was notable.

Phillips was born in 1880 in Sedalia, Missouri. His father was a Methodist minister. Orphaned in infancy and reared by an aunt, Phillips went on to graduate from Howard University Law School in Washington, D.C., where he lived in the home of the noted black poet, Paul Lawrence Dunbar. While still in school, he served a short stint in the Department of Justice. A man with a wide variety of legal interests, he represented universities as well as deposed union officials.

In 1925 he opposed Mayor Victor Miller and supported Louis P. Aloe in the Republican primary. Miller won and Phillips later supported his Democratic opponent, William L. Igoe, in the general election. In the 1926 primary, Phillips filed as a candidate for the Republican nomination for Congress in the old Twelfth Congressional District and ran third in a field of five candidates. In the 1929 primary, he was active on behalf of former Mayor Henry Kiel.

Phillip's leadership in the community for a new hospital became evident in 1922, when he actively supported an $87 million bond issue, with the understanding that $1 million would be used for the building of a new black hospital.

Credit Argus

The bond issue passed, but powerful interests supporting construction of a "colored annex" to City Hospital No. 1 sought to halt the construction of a separate hospital. Phillips carried the fight to the Board of Aldermen and finally secured favorable consideration from the Welfare Committee. Strong opposition continued, but it was finally overcome.

Construction of the hospital began in 1932 under the administration of Mayor Victor Miller. (Some ten years had passed since the bond issue of 1922.) The first battle was won, but Homer Phillips did not live to see construction begin. Six years passed before the hospital was completed.

Homer G. Phillips Hospital[28], presently located at 2601 North Whittier in The Ville, is a primary health care center. During the early 1900's, members of St. Louis' black community became increasingly sensitive to the inadequacy of the system of health care delivery and the inequality of the medical training programs open to Blacks in the city. Taxes from black citizens supported municipal hospitals where only white doctors were trained. Attempts by the black community to promote a suggested change in hospital policy in favor of training black and white doctors simultaneously at the same institutions were met by threats of strikes by white doctors.

In 1914, a committee of seventeen concerned black physicians, led by Mr. C. K. Robinson, appealed to and convinced city officials to purchase the old vacant Barnes Hospital at Garrison and Lawton on their behalf, for the purpose of establishing a health care center open to black patients and doctors of the city.

Named City Hospital No. 2, this 177-bed facility was opened to the public and began admitting patients in November, 1919, upon completion of the necessary renovations. Dr. Roscoe C. Haskell served as the first superintendent of the hospital. In 1921, scarcely two years after the hospital opened, it became apparent that the old Barnes Hospital complex was too small to accommodate its clientele and that the lack of space detracted significantly from dispensing adequate health care to the community. The committee of seventeen was re-organized, and the battle for what is now Homer G. Phillips Hospital began.

The singularly most important force behind the acquisition of the new hospital was attorney Homer Gilliam Phillips. In 1922, Phillips worked actively for the passage of an $87 million bond issue, with the understanding that $1 million of it would be devoted to the construction of a separate and distinct institution for the care of the black population of the city. Once the bond issue was passed, however, attempts were made to prevent the construction of this new hospital. Opponents of the new facility obtained an interpretation from City Counselor Munch that stated that construction of this new health care center was not implied in the passage of the bond issue. An alternate proposal, the construction of a colored annex adjoining City Hospital No. 1, was offered by this dissenting faction; however, Phillips, after much persuasive argumentation, secured a favorable consideration from the city's Welfare Board headed by Alderman Neiderlucke. Construction of the facility was finally begun in 1932, and the dedication was held on Monday, February 22, 1937.

credit: **Community Development Agency Collection**

Considered by some today to be one of the most significant accomplishments of St. Louis' black community, Homer G. Phillips Hospital also played a vitally important role in maintaining the continuity of The Ville neighborhood. The Hospital employs approximately 800-900 people and is one of the major sources of employment in The Ville.

On a city-wide and national level, Homer G. Phillips Hospital, which offers a wide variety of training programs, has been in the past a center for the education of black doctors, nurses, and medical personnel.

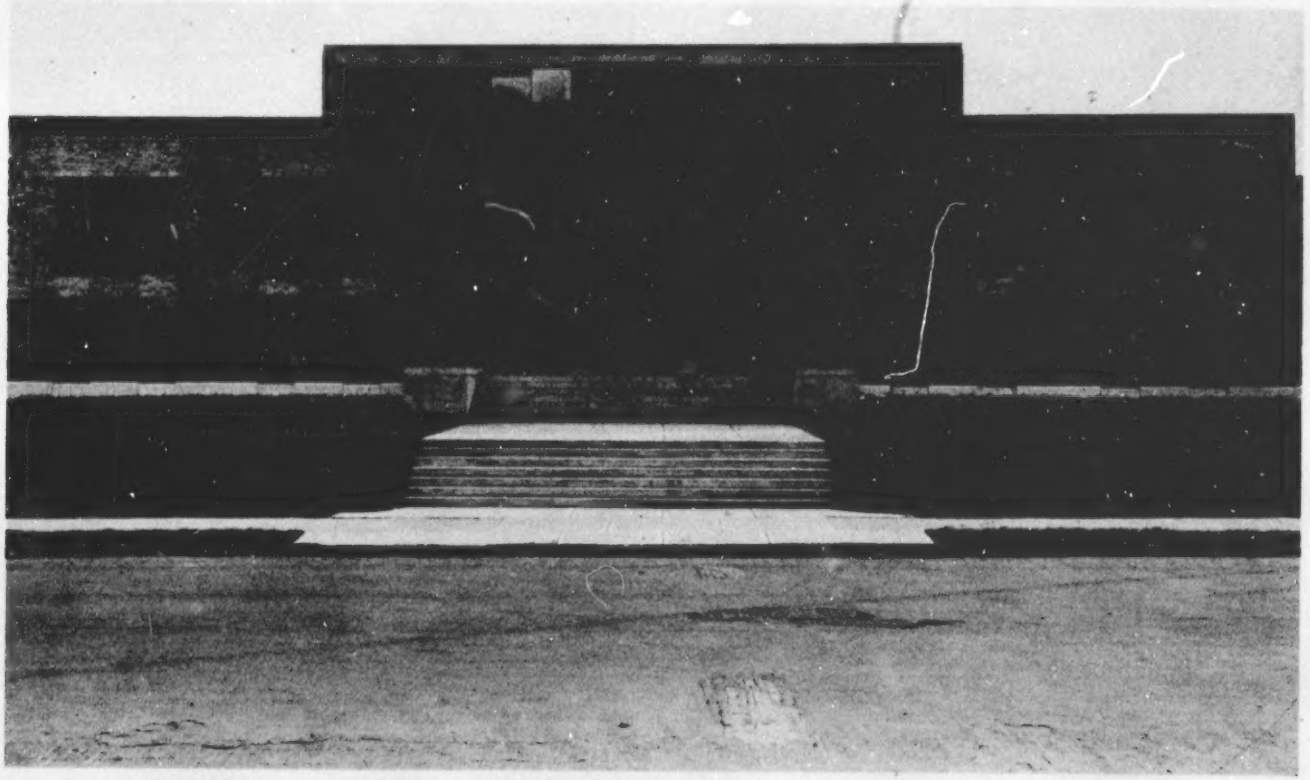
The Hospital houses the facilities of a school of Medical Records Library Science and a school of X-ray technicians.

Today, internship programs, certified by the American Medical Association, in the specialties of internal medicine, pediatrics, urology, general surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, otolaryngology, pathology, ophthalmology, radiology, and neuropsychiatry are offered. The Hospital also maintains a clinic.

Homer G. Phillips Women's Auxiliary makes a large contribution toward maintaining high standards of health care delivery. The Auxiliary's forty members devote 3,000 hours a year to the Hospital in the form of volunteer work. The Auxiliary also sponsors fund-raising events.

In 1973, St. Louis commissioned two separate audits to be done on the city hospitals. Both independent audits recommended closing City Hospital No. 1 and retaining Homer G. Phillips. Mrs. Nancy Fields, currently president of the Homer G. Phillips Women's Auxiliary, said: "Homer G. Phillips is a source of employment and a health care center in an area that is rapidly losing all of its other major institutions. The Hospital is a necessary component of black community life in metropolitan St. Louis."

The Tandy Community Center, named in honor of Captain Charlton H. Tandy, a military hero in the Civil War and a leader in the movement for public education for Blacks in Missouri, was created as a recreational facility for the community in 1938. The committee, which pressed for the recreational program for Blacks, included Messrs. James Cook, David Grant, C. M. Evans, C. B. Broussard, W. H. J. Beckett Vashon and Dr. O. S. McLellan. Vashon and Gamble recreational centers were also built to provide for community activity in densely populated black districts. Tandy Center provided a swimming pool, reading rooms, basketball court, boxing, and industrial arts.



credit: **Community Development Agency Collection**

1940-1954

Ice cream socials were popular. These affairs were held on church lawns. Churches also had annual potluck suppers, wonderful bazaars, carnivals, and teas. St. James produced the Veiled Prophet Pageant and the May Queen festival. The summer months enabled us to attend lawn parties held in back yards. Music and dancing provided entertainment; punch and cookies were served. As a young adult, I loved the sound of the big bands. Fletcher Henderson, Duke Ellington, Lionel Hampton, Louis Armstrong–they appeared at either Kiel Auditorium or the arena.

Outdoor roller skating provided us with fun and bruises. Our favorite street was the 4200 west block of Cote Brilliante. Carondelet Park permitted skating on the sidewalks, so after a picnic supper we would skate. During the winter months, we could skate indoors to music in the gymnasium of the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA Branch at 613 Garrison Avenue. The main building had been an old mansion. St. Louisans loved to dance. Informal dances were held in the home and at the Tom Powell Post No. 77 at 3709 West Belle. Local musicians were engaged. Formal dances were held in the People's Finance Building, 11 North Jefferson, the Maple's Hotel, Kiel Auditorium, and the Austin Waiters Club. Music was often provided by the George Hudson orchestra and the Jeeter and Pillows Orchestra. Summer dances were given at Johnson's place on Whitney Avenue in Pagedale, formerly Wellston.

Family picnics were frequent. Annual picnics were given by the schools and churches at O'Fallon Park. Small picnics and wiener roasts were given at Forest Park, Carondelet, O'Fallon, Chain of Rocks Park. We also went to Black Jack, Missouri, and Creve Coeur, Missouri.

Professional basketball was played in the Coliseum at Jefferson and Washington Avenues. Professional Negro baseball teams played their games at Stars Park. The field for Negroes was located at Compton and Laclede Avenues. There were annual events to look forward to–the Pine Street YMCA Circus, held in the gymnasium. My father was a member of the board of directors. Grandmother Thurmon had furnished one of the dormitories. The Annie Malone Children's May Day celebration, at 2612 Goode Avenue, created plenty of excitement. My mother, a member of the board of directors, allowed my sister and I to volunteer our services for the entire day. Our father was a Mason, so he marched in the big parade. Simms Band was always a big attraction. This day brought large crowds to The Ville. Residents served refreshments to visiting friends.

The Ville had its own playwright and producer, Mrs. Ruth Shelton. She presented many of her original productions at St. James A.M.E. Church. Elocution lessons were taught by Mrs. William Cullin Bridges and Mrs. Daniel Bowles. Local dramatic groups performed their plays at the Oden. Professional theater took place at the American Theater. Negroes were segregated so our family attended only when outstanding Negroes were performing, such as Josephine Baker, Burt Williams, Clarence Mukes, and Richard Harrison. Attendance at the Municipal Opera and the Symphony brought pleasure to many Ville residents. Poro College presented all the outstanding Negro talent within its auditorium. Marian Anderson, Roland Hayes, Miller and Lyles, Florence Cole Talbert, Clarence Cameron White, and many others. Wonderful invitational receptions were given on the roof garden. We were fortunate to see and hear many outstanding Negroes at the Sumner High School. Carter G. Woodson, Langston Hughes, Dean Pickens, County Cullin. Our rich heritage was a part of everyday life at home, at church, and at school.

A social custom existed in The Ville which I liked. Sunday afternoons were spent calling on friends. We paid short visits, then we were served light refreshments. Some of our friends lived in other neighborhoods. Until my college years I always visited the art museum, the zoo, and Shaw's Garden with the family. Breakfast or dinner was served in the park after the zoo or art museum visits. Moonlight boat rides on the river were available to Negroes on Monday night only. These excursions were arranged by Jessie Johnson. Many fine Negro musicians played on the boats. The late Charles Creath, Louis Armstrong, Fate Marable, Cecil Scott and his Salt and Pepper Shakers, also Eddie Johnson.

My family taught that there was dignity in legitimate work well done. Some of us left The Ville for awhile, but we returned to rear our children, hopefully in a stable environment. It was also our desire to share our knowledge and help those less fortunate than ourselves to be prepared to climb the ladder of success. Little did we know that Negroes would have opportunities open to them in so many new areas and professions. (V-35)

As this history of social life suggests, Ville residents enjoyed the recreational facilities of the city and the county although race restrictions persisted. Within The Ville the Tandy Community Center was a place for athletic events for all ages.

Life in St. Louis and in The Ville in the forties was studded with an assortment of victories and setbacks, richness in daily life, and disruption and displacement. By 1945, the westward movement of the black population had created a block of black wards and sorely taxed the black schools in the West End and in The Ville.

In October, 1941, Frank M. Jones became the first chairman of the Colored Clerks Circle, which was organized "to raise the industrial standards for Negro youth."[29] The organization, fostered by the Urban League in keeping with its policy of involvement in the occupational sector, pressed for equal opportunity for Blacks in businesses. An example of these issues was the pressure on Woolworths to employ black clerks. Following arbitration by the Urban League Field Industrial Secretary Arnold B. Walker, Woolworths agreed to increase the number of Blacks employed in stores which served Blacks.

In The Ville the Woolworths on Sarah and Easton was the object of concern. The agreement was: "At present, the Sarah and Easton Store employs ten whites and four colored—to add three colored and transfer three whites. Saturday help of eight white and two colored to be changed to five colored and five white."[30]

The membership list for the Colored Clerks Circle shows that many of the members lived in The Ville and on Enright, Cook, and West Belle.

Daily life, according to Ms. Kitty Hall's column "Ville News," included speakers, marriages, special recognition for the men back from the war, attention to successful black students at Sumner and Stowe, and a continuous flow of social events centering at St. James, Antioch Baptist, Sumner, Stowe, and the "Y" auditoriums.

The varied life in the community is mirrored in a selection of articles from the *St. Louis Argus* from January through June in 1945. The events selected involved residents in The Ville, institutions in The Ville, or functions which involved the community.

The NAACP launched a drive for 9,000 members in 1945. Under the leadership of Reverend James Cook, a committee was formed to promote fair employment practices (February 23, 1945).

In March, 1945, a revised constitution for Missouri passed in St. Louis by a 3:1 majority, but it failed to gain the majority of votes in all but one of the heavily populated Negro wards. The trend of Negro vote was laid to the lack of adequate civil rights provisions and a requirement for segregation in public schools except in cases otherwise provided by law. In the Fifth, Sixth, and Eighteenth Wards the code failed to gain a majority. Only in the Fourth Ward in Elleardsville did the majority of Negroes favor it by a vote of 1850 to 1370.

Club women held meetings to honor George Washington Carver and Frederick Douglas. The Harlem taproom was opened at 4131 Easton Avenue. Dr. Ruth Harris received a Sloan Foundation grant for curriculum development. Dr. Herman Dreer became a professor at Stowe Teachers College.

In "The Ville News," club meetings, entertainments, weddings, and notes on the men returning from the armed forces appeared. One of the well-known returning heroes was Captain Wendell O. Pruitt. He served in the Mediterranean and returned to the United States in February, 1945, to serve at Tuskegee Army Air Field.

The Pine Street Y brought Count Basie and his orchestra for the Y Circus (February 23, 1945, p. 3)

The Board of Education approved the acceptance of a grant by Stowe Teachers College from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation for a study of local economic conditions.

On April 20, 15 youths and their parents appeared in juvenile court following the wave of shootings in the West End and Elleardsville in which two high school athletes were seriously wounded. "Those involved in such lawlessness are disgracing their race and tearing down the good their leaders are attempting, the judge said." (*Argus*, April 20, 1945.)

The Booklovers Club met at 4335 Cote Brilliante Avenue. Mrs. Herman Dreer was the hostess at the meeting, a discussion of Gunnar Myrdal's book, *An American Dilemma.*

Sumner High School evening school was expanding its course offerings.

The "Ville News" stated that "Ville children have few places to go and many wander in the streets. The Elleardsville Y has formed a teen club and has found something to hold their interest." The Community Center also offered teenage entertainment with the help of the juvenile officers and any of the delinquent have been cleared from the streets." (*Argus*, January 12, 1945, p. 2)

Frank Williams wrote a column on January 5 in which he asked, "Can we have a democracy and live and work in the pattern of segregation?"

John T. Clark, executive secretary of the Urban League, led Negro citizens in an appeal to have the Cote Brilliante School designated as a Negro elementary school. The committee, which included Reverend Love, the pastor of St. James A.M.E. Church, and officers of the local block units, cited the crowded conditions in the Negro schools since three years before, when rapid expansion of the Negro residential area transformed the area around the school into one where Negroes live. Opposing the plan were members of the Marcus Avenue Improvement Association (*Argus*, January 5, 1945, p. 1.)

In a headline on June 22 in the *Argus*, Ville resident Professor Herman Dreer, Lincoln University instructor; J. T. Johnson; Mrs. Ruth Williams, former Stowe instructor; and Attorney Lulu Howard were denied the right to register at Washington University because of their race. Washington University's stand on this issue caused the NAACP to fight tax exemption for the University on properties owned in the city on the ground that Negro citizens would have to pay for the amount lost to the city even though qualified Negroes were not allowed to attend the University. The petition from the University states that the income from tax-exempt properties are used to pay the difference between the cost of educating students and the tuition paid by them.

Discontent in the black community became increasingly vocal. Expectations had been raised which were not being met; "separate but equal" did not mean equal salaries for black teachers. In 1949 the teachers at Stowe publicly protested this inequity. A report issued that same year by the St. Louis School Board Building Commission labeled thirty of the schools in the system as unsafe; the majority were in the black districts.

Overcrowding was another serious and common condition in the Negro schools. Sumner High School was originally built for an enrollment of no more than 750. By 1950, facilities had been enlarged to accommodate only 1200 students, yet the enrollment at Sumner in 1950, 2053, was almost double the capacity.

The Ville was prominent in the fight against restrictive covenants in 1947. The decision which ended the use of restrictive covenants on individual properties involved a piece of land on Labadie which was named in the covenant in 1911. James T. Bush, Sr., a real estate broker, sold the property on Labadie to J. D. Shelley. When trouble arose over the sale, Mr. Bush assumed the responsibility for Shelley's defense and formed the Real Estate Brokers Association of St. Louis. It was this association that financed the suit and brought the case to the U. S. Supreme Court in 1947.

The Supreme Court ruled that restrictive covenants which limited access to property on the basis of race were illegal. The decision, which stated that constitutional rights guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment were violated, was based on precedent established in 1917, in Buchanan vs. Warley which referred to the unconstitutionality of a city ordinance which denies rights to colored people.[31]

This final blow to the use of restrictive covenants to deny property to a buyer on the basis of racial discrimination had a critical effect on The Ville. Until this ruling, many black people who could afford larger homes were prevented from moving from the area. With the opening of the West End of St. Louis to black people, many residents of The Ville moved to adjacent streets and private places. This situation was aggravated by the Mill Creek Valley relocation project in the fifties.

The Mill Creek Valley was a section in St. Louis in 1940 that had "decayed into 100 blocks of hopeless rat-infested, residential slums.'[32] The area became a federally-assisted urban renewal project; the actual land acquisition began in late 1958 and demolition in early 1959. It was estimated that "1,772 families and 610 individuals were displaced" with the majority relocating in "an area bounded by Delmar, Hodiamont, Jefferson, and Natural Bridge."[33]

The Ville is located near the center of this area. Much of the empty housing created by the departure of prosperous blacks from The Ville was filled by the dislocated people from the Mill Creek Valley.

Meanwhile, the landmark decision of 1954, Brown vs. Board of Education, ended the segregation of schools according to race, and removed one of the critical functions of The Ville.

With the end of segregation, Stowe Teachers College was merged with Harris Teachers College, located outside of The Ville. High school and elementary schools all over the city and county accepted black children. Lincoln Law School, located in the old Poro College building, was merged with Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri. The need for a set of separate institutions was much reduced, although all barriers were not eliminated.

The Ville had been deeply involved in the desegregation disputes. It was Lloyd Gaines' request for admission to the University of Missouri Law School in 1938 which resulted in the Supreme Court ruling that a black man was entitled to admission into a state school. As a result, Lincoln Law School was established as a branch of Lincoln University, preserving the "separate but equal" status.

In 1949 Majorie V. Toliver filed suit to enter Harris Teachers College because Stowe Teachers College, to which she was admitted, was not accredited by the North Central Association. Judge James F. Nangle ordered the School Board to allow her to enroll at Harris. This ruling resulted in further litigation.[34]

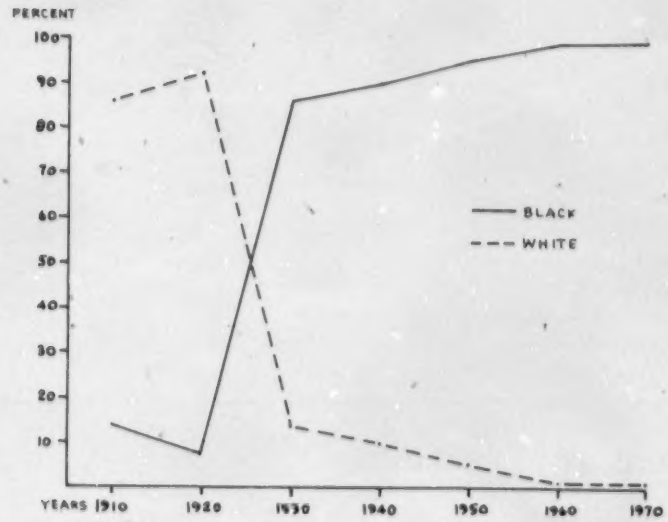
Overcrowding at Sumner High School and at the Washington School caused the School Board to consider the annexations of Marquette for Sumner use and the bussing of black school children across town to the Wheatley School. Both moves were opposed by concerned parents. The decision to end racial segregation in May, 1954, "was hailed as the most important since the Dred Scott Decision in 1857."[35] Dr. Ruth Harris, president of Stowe Teachers College, told the *Argus* she had placed a statement on the bulletin board which read: "Three cheers and Hurrah." Citing the meaning behind it she said, "If children get to know each other going to school together, the community will take up and follow the pattern."

The hoped-for movement to integrated communities was not to follow. Although many black people moved to areas which had been unavailable before the school integration ruling, The Ville remained a segregated community as did the schools in the area. Residential segregation persisted and appeared to accelerate as middle-income families of both races moved out of the city.

population changes

The loss of the middle-aged population is further reflected in the census estimates of the percent of professionals in The Ville. Until 1960 over 10 per cent of the work force in the tract held professional positions in a city in which only 2 per cent of the black population was professional. This number was reduced to 7 per cent in 1960 and 1970. There was at no time a high concentration of professional people in The Ville according to the data available, but black professionals did live in the area. This fact is supported by a cross-reference of leaders in the black community from 1900 to 1952.[36] Address verification in the city directories illustrates that a third of the black leaders in the community lived in The Ville at some time during their careers.

POPULATION TREND BY RACE FOR THE VILLE, 1910 - 1970



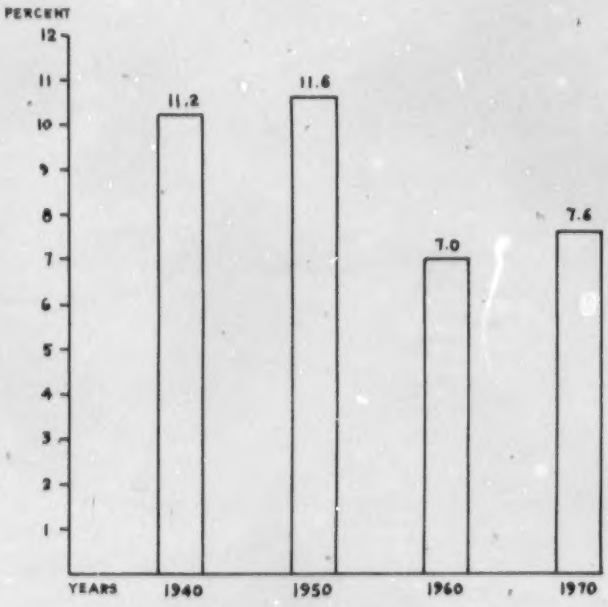
SOURCE: UNITED STATES CENSUS; WARD 22 IN 1910; WARD 20 IN 1920; CENSUS TRACT 11C IN 1930; CENSUS TRACT 11C IN 1940; CENSUS TRACT 11-C IN 1950; CENSUS TRACT 0011-C IN 1960; AND CENSUS TRACT 1113 IN 1970, BY RACE.

Changes in the population of The Ville were similar to trends in much of the city. The population of The Ville in 1930 was 9,102; in 1970, it was 4,339—a 50 per cent loss. The population pyramid below illustrates the percentage change in the population by age and sex for the years 1930 and 1970. In 1930 the dominant group is between twenty-five and forty-five years old. There are few old people. In 1970 over 25 per cent of the population is over fifty-five years of age. The most marked decrease is in the middle-aged group.[37]

Changes in the population of the city of St. Louis were reflected in The Ville between 1930 and 1940. As was stated, many black families moved to The Ville between 1890 and 1910.

Racial segregation increased in the city between 1920 and 1970. Between 1920 and 1930, the racial makeup of the area which encompasses The Ville (Tract 1113) changed from approximately one-third black to 88 per cent black and 12 per cent white. By 1940, The Ville was 90 per cent black. In 1970 the population of the area was 99 per cent black.

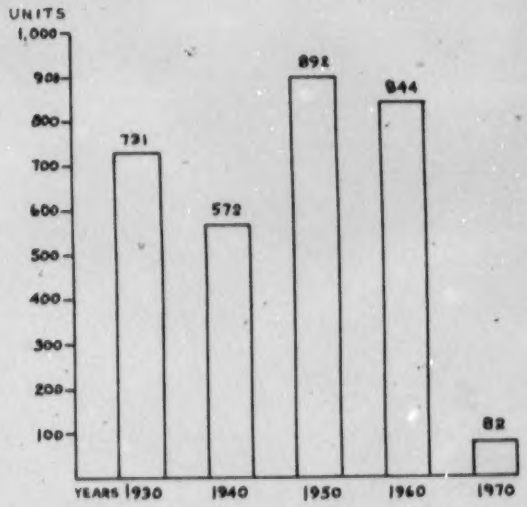
PERCENT OF PROFESSIONAL WORKERS IN THE VILLE, 1940 - 1970



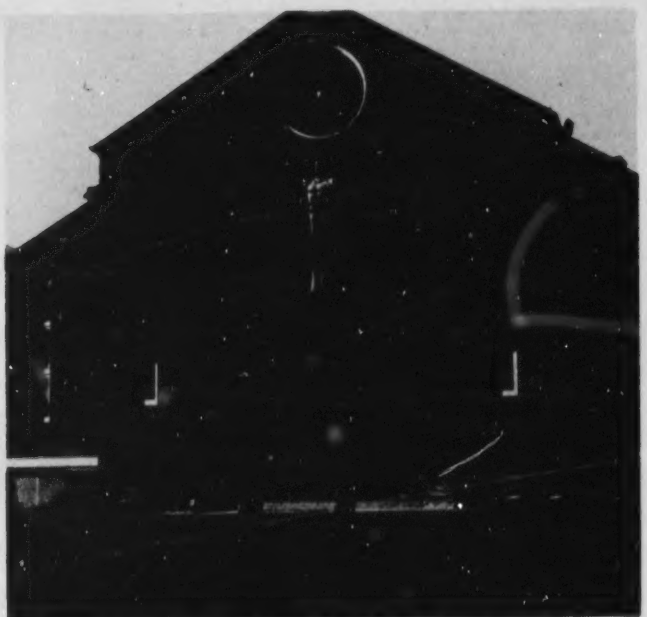
SOURCE: UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU, ST. LOUIS CENSUS TRACTS 1940, 1950, 1960, AND 1970 TRACT NUMBERS: 11-C, 11-C, 0011-C, AND 1113.

The population in the city of St. Louis reached its peak in 1950 at 856,796. Between 1950 and 1970 St. Louis lost approximately 45 per cent of its population to six counties. Although the population in the metropolitan area rose, every section of the city experienced net out-migration. The Ville was no exception. While most of the initial out-migration to the counties was among whites, this movement opened up areas for well-off Blacks from The Ville in sections of the city where lower density and larger housing was available.

NUMBER OF OWNER OCCUPIED DWELLING UNITS IN THE VILLE, 1930 - 1970



SOURCE: BUREAU OF THE UNITED STATES CENSUS: 1930, FEDERAL CENSUS METROPOLITAN ST. LOUIS BY CENSUS TRACTS 1930, TABLE 10 HOMES BY TENURE AND VALUE OR MONTHLY RENTAL, FOR CENSUS TRACTS, P-117; 1940, TABLE 4 DWELLING UNITS BY OCCUPANCY STATUS AND RACE OF OCCUPANTS, BY CENSUS TRACTS, P-85; 1950, TABLE 3 CHARACTERISTICS OF DWELLING UNITS, BY CENSUS TRACTS, P-8; 1960, TABLE H-1 OCCUPANCY AND STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HOUSING UNITS, BY CENSUS TRACTS, P-145; AND 1970, TABLE P-4 GENERAL AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEGRO POPULATION, CENSUS TRACTS, P-144.



St. James A.M.E. Church—4301 St. Ferdinand credit: R. A. Faber

With the beginning of a marked out-migration of black middle-income families from The Ville, the low rent and low purchase price for homes in The Ville created a situation advantageous for the in-migrating Blacks of lower income and educational level. The status which had accrued to such black landmarks as Sumner and Homer G. Phillips was not sufficient to keep a stable population in the community. By 1970 the population of The Ville was only half the 1930 figure.

Between 1950 and 1960 an exodus of professionals, many of them teachers, is noted by residents. The census figures on occupation show a 6 per cent drop in the number of professionals in The Ville tract. This movement may be explained by the assignment of some Sumner teachers to schools in other parts of St. Louis and by the greater availability of housing outside of the area.

In The Ville signs of physical deterioration soon became apparent. A reduction in home maintenance, a substantial loss of home owners, and a drastic depletion in the number of dwelling units occurs between 1950 and 1970 (see figure).

Of the institutions which remained in The Ville and reinvested in the neighborhood, Tandy Community Center, the churches, and Homer G. Phillips are the most notable.

Julia davis

If you wish to learn more about Black Studies from the point of view of a researcher in Negro History for sixty years, a classroom teacher in the public schools, and a writer and speaker on the subject–have a chat with Julia Davis.

This recurring comment by former residents of The Ville and by knowledgeable people who have been students of Ms. Davis during the last fifty years attests to her special place in the community.

A graduate of the class of 1909 at Sumner High School, Ms. Davis received her A.B. degree from Stowe Teachers College, her M.A. from the State University at Iowa, and additional training from Boston, Syracuse, Northwestern, and New York Universities. Ms. Davis' career includes a position as a newspaperwoman on the *Central Afro-American* and an appointment as a church historian for the Central Baptist Church in 1927. Ms. Davis built her home in The Ville in 1926 on land that her father purchased in 1880. This land had been used as a private tennis court for many years.

Ms. Davis taught for fifty years before her retirement in 1961. As a master teacher, she did demonstration teaching for students at Stowe College. She apprenticed at the Dessalines, taught at L'Ouverture, West Belle, Wheatley, Cottage Avenue, and Simmons Schools (1926-1961). She taught summer school at Lincoln University the summers of 1945, 1947, and 1949.

In 1953, Ms. Davis conducted a survey in The Ville on human relations as part of a course at New York University, directed by Professors Daniel Dodson and Rhetta Arter. The map which Ms. Davis used was the basis for the present study by Washington University students.

On her retirement in 1961, she donated $2,500 to the St. Louis Public Library for the establishment of "The Julia Davis fund for purchase of materials on the contribution of the American Negro and African to America and World Culture". This fund was primarily responsible for the creation by the public library of the "Julia Davis Collection," which is housed in the main library in St. Louis. Thirteen years later on April 21, 1974, the Julia Davis Branch Library at 4666 Natural Bridge was dedicated in her honor.

The Julia Davis Branch Library, which serves the Sumner District, has been established in her honor by the St. Louis Public Library Board because of her contributions to the community in education and in the awareness of the contributions of Negroes and peoples of African descent to world culture . . . During the St. Louis Bicentennial, Ms. Davis served as chairman of the Research Committee on the publication Negroes – Their Gift to St. Louis.[38]

credit: **privately owned**

today

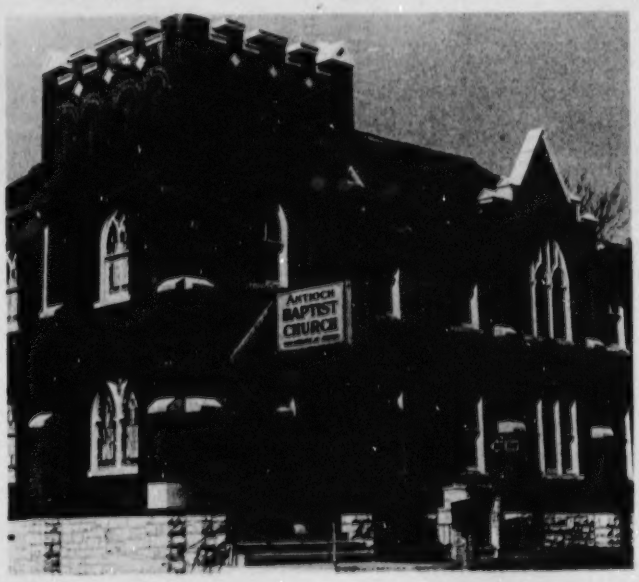
An interview with the Tandy Center Director for twenty years, Mr. Sam Westbrooks, illustrates the dilemmas and possibilities of The Ville. The Tandy Center served approximately 9,000 children and adults from October to June in 1975.

> *People need and desire recreation as an outlet, and it doesn't matter very much that the physical or social structure of the neighborhood has declined; we have reduced the number of programs but not necessarily the number of people we serve.* (V-28)

Tandy is the headquarters for the Silver Gloves Boxing Tournament, an annual city event sponsored by the Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry. In addition to basketball, volleyball, swimming, dancing, crafts, and dramatics, a youth education program is in progress at Tandy. Through this program, high school age students who have delinquency records participate in a classroom setting where individual training and assistance are provided. The program offers admission to regular high schools as a reward for high achievers.

Free lunches are served at four o'clock with the help of four part-time staff aids. Programs are assisted by two auxiliary groups—the Youth Council and the Senior Council. Both were organized in 1937 and have operated steadily since that date.

Between 1954 and 1970, six churches in The Ville invested in larger buildings. Antioch Baptist Church built its Christian Education building in 1954 at a cost of $235,000. The Antioch Day Nursery opened in 1957. Formerly a neighborhood as well as a St. Louis church, Antioch today draws only 5 per cent of its membership from The Ville.



credit: **Angela Walsh**

credit: **Angela Walsh**

St. Phillip's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 2424 Goode, enjoys a half-century tradition in the Ville. An outgrowth of the Carr Street Mission, the church has been identified as a strong advocate of integration since its move to the Ville in 1926. Through the years St. Phillip's has attracted a widely-based congregation including Black and white representatives of the Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian and Presbyterian denominations in addition to members instructed in the Lutheran (Missouri Synod) faith.

St. Phillip's has maintained a bi-racial ministry and presently serves a membership over 500, the largest St. Louis Lutheran congregation in a black community. In 1966 the congregation re-affirmed its commitment to the Ville with the construction of a new church on the Goode Avenue site.

St. James A.M.E. Church and Home represent one of the oldest and one of the newest institutions in The Ville. St. James Church is eighty-one years old in 1975; the James House, built on the site of the former Poro College, was a project started by the church in the late 1960's under a "turnkey project" sponsored by the Office of Housing and Urban Development of the federal government. The church raised $45,000 toward the construction cost of $2,700,000. The James House, administered by the St. Louis Housing Authority, has 210 residents who are elderly and self-sufficient. Lunches are provided by St. Matthews Catholic Church through a government-subsidized program. A medical care unit is provided through the voluntary services of professionals. Further interrelationship of Ville institutions is illustrated by the services provided to residents by members of the community. The children from the Annie Malone's Children's Home do chores for the older residents and help them to

tidy their apartments. Antioch Baptist Church, Newstead Baptist Church, and churches in Kinloch provide theatrical and spiritual groups which present programs for the residents. Harris Teachers College has provided teachers who give lectures and lessons at the James House.

At this writing, the future of Homer G. Phillips is uncertain. Because of a reduction in the city budget for health care facilities, there have been proposals to close or to merge Homer G. Phillips Hospital and the Max C. Starkloff Memorial Hospital. The importance of this hospital to the present residents of The Ville is difficult to evaluate. Many Ville residents go to other hospitals for their medical care. As is true of the churches in the community, many of the patients in the hospital and the members in the auxiliary are made up of residents of other neighborhoods in St. Louis City and County.

However, the significance of Homer G. Phillips for Blacks in St. Louis is summed up in the following quote:

> *The black community of St. Louis would be losing more than a hospital if Homer G. Phillips were to close. It is identification for black doctors across the nation, many of whom were residents and interns there. That was when there were almost no other hospitals at which black physicians could train after graduating from black medical schools. It is a source of jobs. Most of the more than 900 employees are black. The payroll is more than $18,000,000 a year. It is a symbol with which Blacks can identify. It produces medical care for north St. Louis.* [39]

The St. Louis City Plan Commission Development Program, presented in June, 1973, designated the Tandy area in which The Ville is located as an area which would require rehabilitation and reconstruction. The commission report describes "rehabilitation and reconstruction areas as districts where the fabric of the neighborhood has been damaged to the point where extensive treatment is necessary."[40] These areas are in such poor condition that systematic code enforcement would not be sufficient to restore the neighborhood. The cost of repairs of residential structures would be prohibitive for present homeowners and tenants.

The increase in the number of vacant structures and vacant lots, the decrease in home ownership, and the rise in the median age in the area has decreased the ability of residents to invest in the community.

However, there are an increasing number of people who care about the future of The Ville. The growth of interest in The Ville can be traced to the historic institutions which still function in the community and to the people who retain a memory of the importance which this community had during the years of segregation and concentration of the black population.

In keeping with the renewed interest in the community, Ville Day was celebrated on June 29, 1973. "The Day was celebrated by a bus tour of historic landmarks in the area, a luncheon, and a fashion show. Exhibits reflecting the culture of the people in the community were displayed."[41] The exhibition emphasized the achievements of some of The Ville's children who became educators, atheltes, and statesmen.

The symbolic importance of the community has prompted an organization of women, The Girlfriends, to study and advocate the designation of The Ville as an historic district.

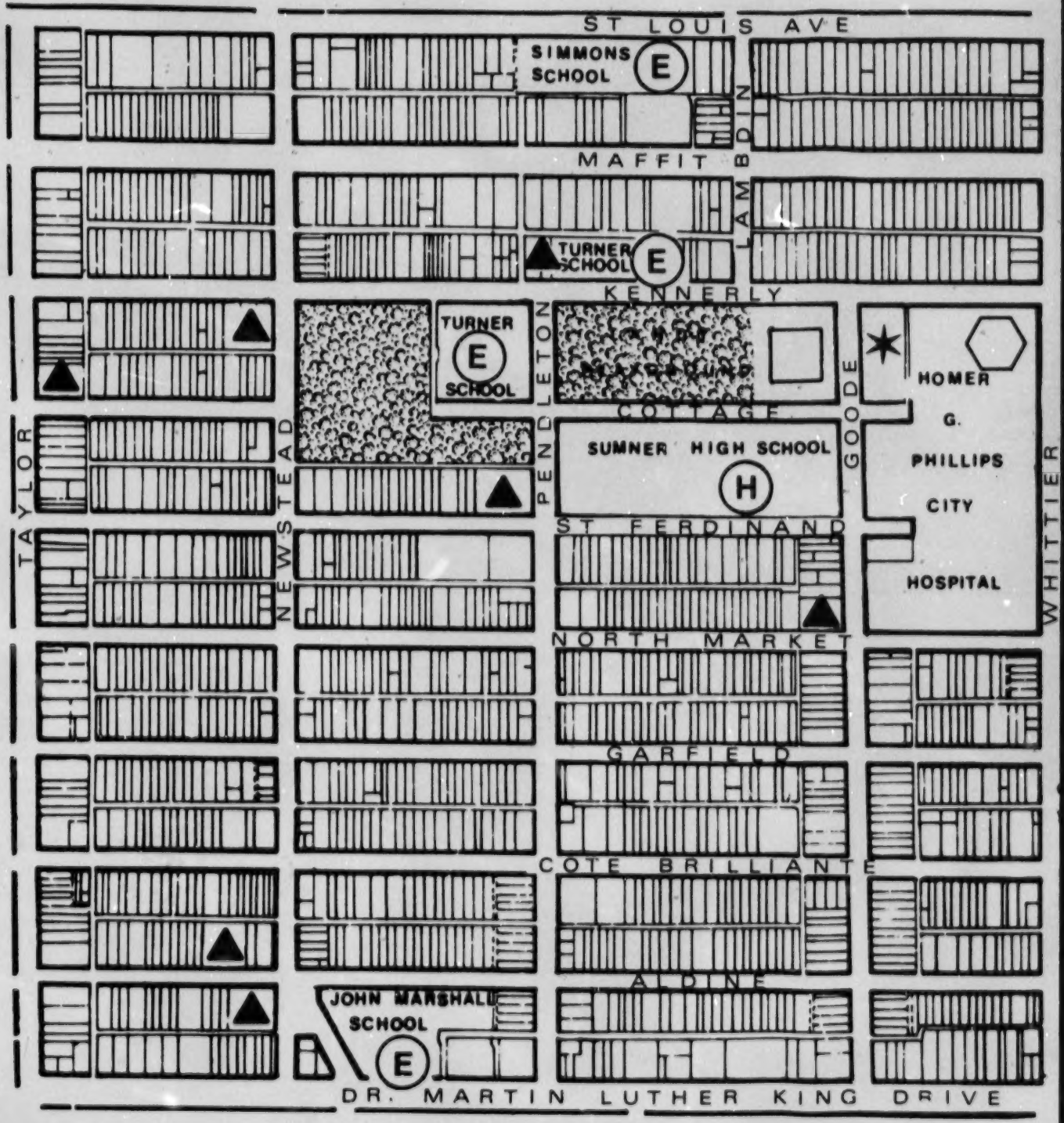
The ordinance which provides for such designation states that the purpose of historic district is:

> *The protection, enhancement, perpetration and use of buildings, structures, parks, sites, and items of natural and artificial phenomena located within a district which imparts a distinctive aspect to the City of St. Louis by serving as a visual reminder of the historic, architectural and cultural heritage of the city, the State of Missouri, and the Nation.* (V-5)

A Ville Historic District Committee has been formed to work with the Girlfriends Historic District Committee to discuss what the people in the neighborhood want to preserve and plan for the area.

The organization of a local historic district committee, a neighborhood betterment society, and the continued viability of local institutions suggest that The Ville and its preservation is of interest to many present and former residents.

credit: Angela Welsh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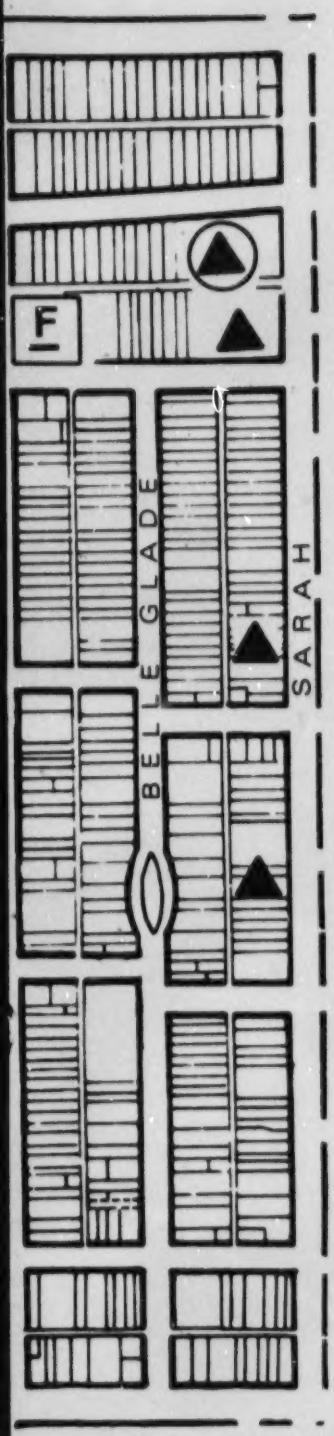
THE VILLE



LEGEND

- OPEN SPACE
- TANDY COMMUNITY CENTER
- (E) ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
- (H) HIGH SCHOOL
- ▲ CHURCH
- (▲) PAROCHIAL SCHOOL
- ⬡ PUBLIC HOSPITAL
- ✶ ANNIE MALONE CHILDREN'S HOME
- [F] FIRE STATION

A street of well-kept homes credit: Angela Walsh

A resident who has lived in The Ville for fifty years sums up her view of the community today:

My husband and I have remained in The Ville. Poro College has been razed. Built on the same site is James House. Its apartments housed active elderly residents. St. James A.M.E. Church is the sponsor. Homer Phillips Hospital, 2601 Whittier Street, in The Ville and city-owned, is constantly making adjustments to financial problems. Its future is uncertain. City taxes are high for those elderly home owners who lived within fixed incomes. Loans are difficult to obtain for renovation and beautification projects. City services are poor. This condition has existed for years. Alleys are not cleaned. Vacant lots–many city-owned–are not kept weed-free and clear of debris. Sections of streets frequently can't be cleaned on schedule because of illegally parked automobiles. Streets need to be repaired. Rat control ordinances are poorly enforced. Too many liquor licenses have been issued by the State Liquor Commission to an area this size. Alcoholics create problems.

Commercial businesses are few. Some commodities are higher priced. Merchants fear robberies. Installation of costly devices have become a necessity. The nearest drugstore to my home is seven blocks away. Within The Ville, the poor and the elderly are victimized, for they lack mobility. Annie Malone Children's Home, the schools, and the churches of The Ville remain the most stable institutions. Tandy Community Center lacks properly supervised innovative programs to service youths and adults. Scores of stripped, guttered, burned-out houses stand among debris and weeds. These structures are an eyesore causing numerous problems such as arson. This endangers the lives of people and surrounding structures. Habitation by squatters who live without utilities in shells of houses, refuge for stolen property, addicts and winos. Disinterested, absentee landlords rent to anyone.

Tenants are not screened. Many lack interest in maintaining property after it has been redecorated and repairs made. The smallest property owner of rental property gives up in despair. Few newcomers possess pride in helping to create and maintain an attractive community. Security devices have been installed by most homeowners. Living with fear has become a way of life. One can only wonder what the future holds for this historic area of St. Louis. (V-35)

Communities are important to residents because of memories as well as the facilities they offer today. The history of The Ville is the story of the persistent demand for education, for housing, for health care, for a cultural life, and for a healthy community by Black Americans, many of whom have lived in St. Louis for five generations.

At a recent colloquium on Ethnic Heritage Studies at Washington University on May 10, 1975, a former resident expressed her feelings about the meaning of life for her during the 1950's and 1960's.[42]

I'm a product of The Ville, third generation. One of the things that I realize is very difficult to get into is the psychological aspect. One thing I can remember from my experience of living in The Ville is that, particularly during the fifties, The Ville was a self-contained neighborhood. There was never a need to go downtown, because there was Easton Avenue and dimestores and supermarkets and this kind of thing. Then, in the late fifties and early sixties, people started talking about 'ghettos' and 'cultural disadvantage.' I was in Michigan in college before it dawned on me 'hey, I'm one of the ghetto people; I'm culturally disadvantaged.' When I think about that, I get really angry, because it just didn't happen to me; it didn't happen to a lot of people that lived in The Ville.

When I think about my educational experiences in The Ville, I did things and my classmates did things that were not going on in any other school in the St. Louis area. I went to Simmons and Sumner. For example, when I was twelve years old in the seventh grade, we were instructed about how to teach on the primary level. And at that time–this is before desegregation–a lot of times there weren't enough black substitute teachers, and they couldn't send a white sub to a black school; they had to be black. So, in the seventh grade, we were divided into teams of two. Anytime a teacher was absent from school, or ill, or whatever reason, we were sent out as a team to teach in the primary grades. Also, when the secretary happened to be absent for whatever reason, we were then sent to the principal's office and took care of the office secretarial duties.

Another thing that wasn't going on anywhere else in the city: seventh and eighth grade students, on our own, developed our own newspaper which was entirely independent from any adults.

We also had team teaching. That was not in the curriculum of the Board of Education. It was something that the teachers did. Now, one of the things that happened as a result of desegregation, along the negative lines, is that your strongest black teachers were put in the white schools. What we were left with in terms of white teachers were either teachers who were marked unsatisfactory for a long period of time or were mediocre. All of this is factual information as you can see if you go down to the Board of Education and secure records of teachers and see how they were rated at that particular time and see what happened. So not only do people change their lifestyles and move out of the neighborhood, but also their livings were made out of the neighborhood. They had a combination of two things.

Personally, I feel that many of The Ville residents fell hook, line and sinker into this thing about living in a ghetto. 'You've got to get out of the ghetto–don't be suppressed.' I think that like it happened to me, it happened to a whole lot of other people, and it had a lot to do with why The Ville got to be where it is now.

Another thing that happened, as Blacks moved out of The Ville: real estate companies came in and bought up the property, and at that point in time anybody could move in. You could live in two rooms and have fifteen or sixteen kids, and it was okay. They didn't care if you tore it down. If you did, they wouldn't come and fix it. That's another aspect that needs to be dealt with at some point in time–why The Ville is where it's at now.

But there are many avenues that can be travelled. One of them is to bring The Ville a power base, both economically and politically. The potential is there for that to happen right now. It only has to be dug up and pulled together. The people who formerly lived in The Ville are still interested in The Ville.

As a final note, a resident of the Greater Tandy area sums up the feelings of many residents:

I think it is important to let you know that the people in the surrounding areas of the Greater Tandy community have been working very hard, day and night, trying to get The Ville neighborhood organized–which we did two weeks ago. So we are in the process of working with the older people on fixed incomes in the area. We realize we have to work and work hard for the area, but people are coming from outside, because this is a focal point . . . You come over, too.[43]

credit: R. A. Faber

The research for this booklet was conducted by graduate and undergraduate students and community members under the sponsorship of the Social Science Institute at Washington University through a grant from the Division of International Education, the United States Office of Education, under the Ethnic Heritage Studies Act of 1974-75.

The purpose of the booklet is twofold: to train students to understand and use the wealth of cultural materials on this American urban neighborhood, The Ville, and to provide a booklet for the use of students and community members about the historic life of this community. This is an ongoing study. It is the intention of the authors that this is an unfinished book to which additions will be made as new information is collected.

The research was conducted through field methods which include participant observation in the community, analysis of historical documents about the community, survey research conducted among a random sample of residents, open-ended interviews with community leaders, and the tape recording of oral histories with three generations of community residents.

Participant observation in the community was conducted by undergraduate and graduate students at Washington University who attended community functions, visited community restaurants, mapped the paths of activity in the community, and catalogued the commercial and institutional life of the area by visiting every commercial and institutional setting. Participant observation is a method which gives recognition to the constant interplay between the role of the observer and the activity of the participant. Students developed strong identifications with neighborhood residents although they were recognized as outsiders.

The analysis of historical documents included the use of census data from 1910 to 1970, the compilation of vital statistics from churches and institutions, the examination of written histories and letters, and the extensive use of newspapers. In each community, local newspapers and the publications of ethnic groups were valuable resources for the understanding of the ethnic heritage of the communities. In some cases, land use maps and city planning documents were important resources for the study of the community boundary designations and the property use changes in the communities.

Three types of interviewing were used in this study. The open-ended interview was used by students who talked to community leaders to gain a greater understanding of the issues which were important in the community over time. These interviews were conducted to give the respondent the greatest range of topics so that the student could learn about the community without a pre-set conception. The second type of interview technique was the oral history. Oral histories were structured from an agenda of questions to gain information about the community in 1900, in 1920, and in 1950. Whenever possible, three generations in the same family were interviewed. Unlike newspaper and institutional documents, the oral histories were designed to record the daily life of the families who make up the community, not necessarily the leaders or prominent citizens. The oral histories were taped. Excerpts from them appear in the text of the booklet. They are coded with the designation of the tape which is available from the Ethnic Heritage Data Bank at the St. Louis Public Library. The final interview tool was a questionnaire made up of a set of questions which allow the respondent limited choices. The questionnaire was used to gain information on a number of questions from a random sample of respondents.

Through the use of a variety of research methods the students have compiled a picture of a community over time and a record of the ethnic heritage of the people who create the community. This is an ongoing history to be enriched by each additional contribution.

FOOTNOTES

The designations (V-1) through (V-36) refer to the oral history tapes which students recorded during the neighborhood study. V stands for the Ville; the numbering system refers to the tape record which is available at the libraries of Washington University and the University of Missouri, St. Louis.

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3. Laurence O. Christiansen, "Cyprian Clamorgan, the Colored Aristocracy of St. Louis, 1858," *Missouri Historical Society Bulletin*, October, 1974, pp. 3-31.
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5. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
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7. Herman H. Long and Charles S. Johnson, *People vs. Property: Race Restrictive Covenants in Housing*, Nashville, Tennessee: Fisk University Press, 1947.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
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11. Daniel T. Kelleher, "St. Louis 1916 Residential Segregation Ordinance," *Missouri Historical Society Bulletin*, April, 1970, p. 240.
12. Buchanan vs. Warley, 245 U.S. 60, November, 1917.
13. *St. Louis Palladium*, Saturday, March 31, 1906, p. 3.
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15. *The Poro College, Poro Hair and Beauty Culture*, Poro College, St. Louis, Missouri, n.d.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Who's Who in Colored America*, Fourth Edition, 1933-37.
18. *St. Louis Argus*, Thursday, April 17, 1975, p. 7-C.
19. Interview with Mr. Philip Stencil.
20. Information on the Aldridge Players was received from Mrs. Mercedes Cunningham and Mrs. Hattie Daniels as told to Mrs. Julia Davis.
21. Dr. Ruth M. Harris, *Stowe Teacher's College and Her Predecessors*, Harris Teacher's College, St. Louis, Missouri, and George E. Stevens, *The History of Central Baptist Church*, St. Louis, Missouri, 1927, pp. 16-17 (C&G).
22. *Official Report, The Printed Record*, St. Louis Board of Education, 1904-1909, St. Louis, Missouri.
23. *St. Louis Argus*, May 13, 1927, p. 1, Vol. XVI, No. 3.
24. *St. Louis Argus*, May 6, 1927, p. 6.
25. The Papers of the Urban League of St. Louis, Missouri, University Archives and Research Collection, Washington University Libraries, St. Louis, Missouri.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Ernest Calloway, "Why Was Homer Phillips Killed?" *St. Louis Argus*, Vol. 64, No. 14, June 5, 1975, p. 16.
28. "25th Anniversary Book," Homer G. Phillips Hospital, St. Louis, Missouri, 1962. Made available by Mrs. Julia Davis.
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30. Shelley vs. Kramer, 334, U.S. 11 (1948).
31. Albert P. Blaustein and Robert Zangrando, *Civil Rights and the American Negro*, New York: Trident Press, 1968, pp. 388-391.
32. St. Louis City Plan Commission, *The St. Louis Development Program*, St. Louis, Missouri, 1971, p. 10.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
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35. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
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Ibid., 1960, P-171, P-145, P-56, P-134, P-21;
Ibid., 1950, P-64, P-8, P-28, P-10;
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U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1910, Abstract with Supplement for Missouri, Table V, P-632.
38. Interview with Mrs. Davis, August, 1975.
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40. *St. Louis Development Program*, June, 1973, p. 109.
41. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 29, 1973.
42. Ethnic Heritage Studies Colloquium Proceedings, August, 1975, Social Science Institute, p. 99.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

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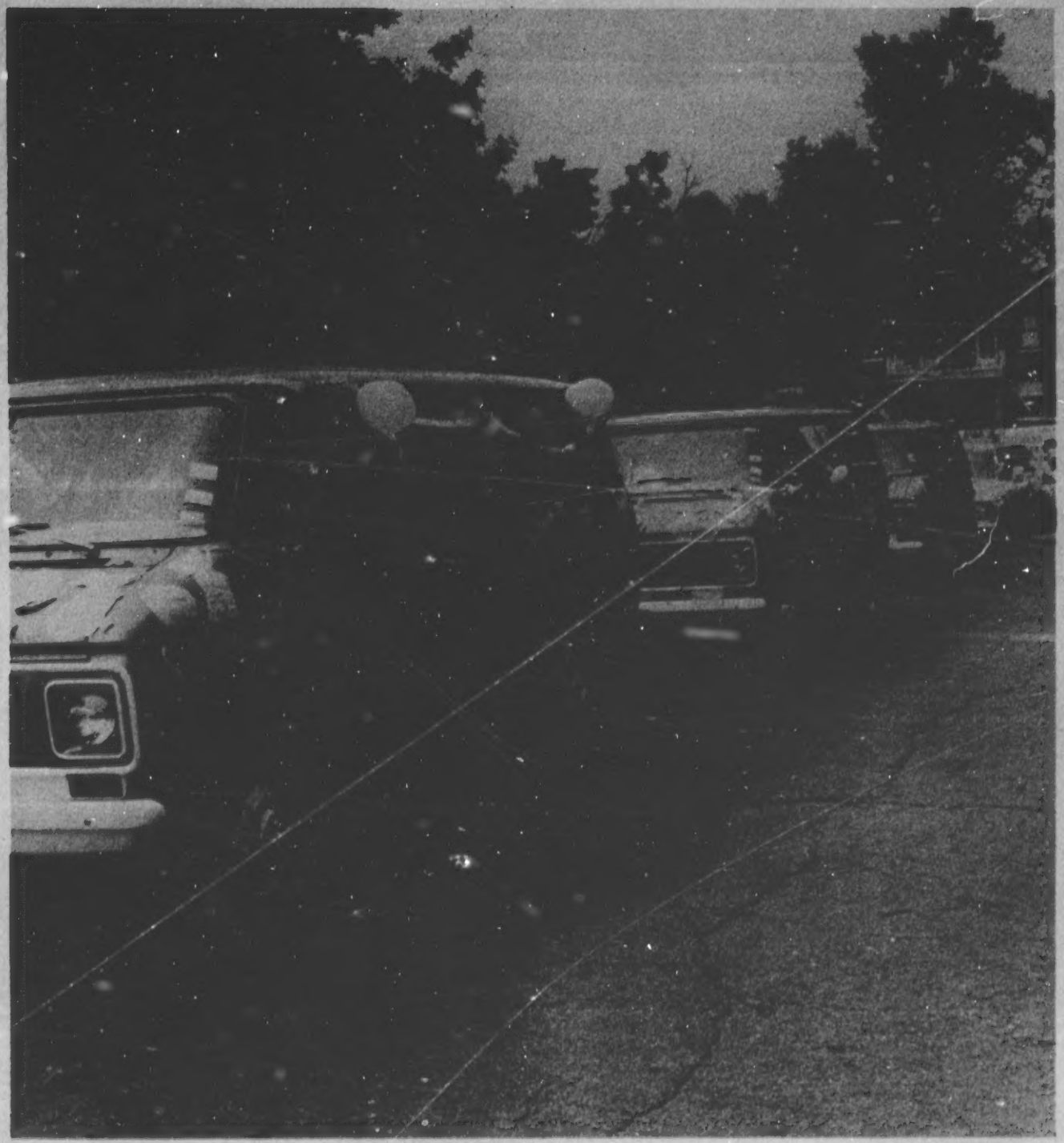

credit: *Argus* Chuck Finney

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ethnic heritage study council members

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Soulard Neighborhood Improvement Association

Sister Marie Charles Buford
Carondelet Community Betterment Federation

Mrs. Olive Cloud
Carondelet Historical Society

Dr. Marvin J. Cummins
Social Science Institute, Washington University

Mr. Steve Edison
International Folklore Federation

Mr. Roger Faber
McKinley High School

Mr. Albert Jefferson
Carondelet Historical Society

Mrs. Lucille Flowers
Resident, The Ville

Mr. William Harrison
Director of Urban Affairs, Washington University

Mr. Ethan Kaplan
Health and Welfare Council

Mr. John Lindenbusch
Missouri Historical Society

Mr. Arthur Meyers
St. Louis Public Library

Mr. Peter Pfeffer
Soulard Neighborhood Improvement Association

Father Salvatore Polizzi
St. Ambrose Church

Mrs. Margaret Richards
The International Institute of St. Louis

Ms. Judy Ronzio
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Mrs. Ann Rynearson
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Sociology Department, Washington University

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The Ville Historic District Committee

Ms. Carolyn Toft
Heritage/St. Louis

Mr. Jess Usery
Community Development Agency

credit: R. A. Faber